

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Mountain Muse

By Teri Adams

When I was 15, my dad picked steel guitar in a country band in Texas. I loved to tag along with him to the honky tonks and watch as the music transformed him. The chords from that steel would float over the bass and lead guitar and lift my dad to a place I couldn't follow. The look on his face was more than love of the music; it was as if his soul were being released. I pick a little bass guitar, but not very well, but I do write. I can't remember a time in my life when I didn't write. And writing is the vehicle that transports me to the place my father once visited with his music. Writing has become my connection to him, now that Alzheimer's has claimed its irretrievable portion. Call that connection inspiration, call it imagination, call it a muse. Whatever it is, when it strikes I have no choice but to go along for the ride. And I go along quite happily and blissfully, because it can go away just as suddenly, leaving me groundless.

To that end, I recently ventured from my little home in middle Georgia to come to the Appalachians for a six day "writing-reviving." I am in the final stages of revising a book, and was starting to become frustrated. I couldn't find the time to work. Every time I got into a groove, the phone would ring or someone would knock on the door. There were clothes to wash, an office slowly being buried under mounds of paperwork, and endless errands to run. I awoke a few days before Christmas utterly convinced that in order to ever complete the book once and for all, I had to go to the North Georgia Mountains. My mom and dad have owned a little cabin in Hiawassee for five years, so the perfect writing environment was waiting for me, calling me. And while I did enjoy the holiday with my children and grandchildren, an inner voice kept tapping at my brain like Poe's raven, "Go to the cabin," it kept repeating.

January 6, 2012. I gassed up my trustworthy Mustang, grabbed my little dog, a few changes of jeans and comfy shirts, non perishable foods, and my laptop and manuscript, and I left. The four and half hour drive was uneventful, but since I had gotten a late start, I didn't reach the road leading out of Helen into Hiawassee until almost dark.

Once out of Helen, winding around the twisting mountain road, the sunlight filtering gold through the trees and over the mountain passes, I felt a gradual release and easing in my muscles, the set of my jaw, the stiff slope of my shoulders. Everything melted out of me as the miles sped by. The characters in my book started speaking to me, urging me to hurry, hurry, we have things to say. Turning onto the road that would take me to the cabin, the evening transformed from pale gold to a deepening red, before sliding into a purple black against the light of one lone star. I rolled down the car window and turned off the CD player. The clear smell of mountain grasses and the whooshing silence of the advancing night crept over me as the last traces of my preoccupations and cares melted away.

Now here I sit, in your fair portion of Georgia. If there is a God's country, then this is it. I awake to air so crisp that it reverberates. I sip my morning coffee on the wooden deck. The mountains look down on me in a protectiveness that is as comforting as my grandmother's old quilt. Then I feel the familiar tug as the words begin tracing themselves in the air and beg me to write, write, write- leading me to the other side where all writers, musicians, poets, and artists have been taken since words, pictures, and music first sparked the human imagination. The mountain has regulated my breathing into a recognizable easy pattern, and my brain starts writing faster than my hands can type. My book is alive and meandering into areas I never dreamed. To break the pace, I write short essays and letters to old friends. The words churn no matter what I am doing: as I eat, sleep, and during my daily walks. The early winter cold, so fresh and sharp it bites my lungs, the dark evening topaz blue standing out in direct contrast to the mountain shadows, the curve of the horizon as it dips in and out of valleys and peaks. Peace. This place, this time, grants me a peace that opens the door to that realm that my father journeyed to so long ago with his music. And somewhere deep inside of me I can see my father's face as he, once again, makes that double-necked steel cry in a Honky Tonk love song.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Sometimes the truth hides in plain sight. Sometimes it is as hard to find as a needle in a haystack. For the last several days I have searched for the truth behind the signing into law of the NDAA - The National Defense Authorization Act - and the language it contains.

Here is a quick review in case you missed out on the story during the holiday season. The main purpose of the NDAA is to pay for the military for another year. We could argue for the rest of the year about what that money actually buys, but the current controversy is about language in the bill which allows the state to detain American citizens and hold them without a trial. After threatening to veto the bill, Obama signed it into law on the last day of 2011.

Opponents of the law point out the obvious threat to our civil liberties inherent in any legislation which validates the ability of the government to sidestep the Constitution. Nine states have already begun recall procedures to punish those representatives who voted for the bill. Outrage is growing as more people begin to realize the implications of this latest move towards totalitarianism.

The march towards totalitarianism is something that we have chronicled here for many years. There appears to be an unbroken chain of intent from at least the Clinton years, when plans were discussed for using United Nations troops on American soil in the event of a national emergency, as declared by the president, through the Bush years and the "patriot" laws. The capitulation of Obama to the fascist trend is only the latest in a long series of movements by the state to increase its power. Shortly after September 11th, 2001, the Bush administration began detaining terrorism suspects without a trial at Guantanamo. When those detentions were challenged in the courts, the government argued that the Authorization for Use of Military Force passed by the Congress on Sep. 18, 2001, allowed those detentions, and in 2004, the Supreme Court agreed in Hamdi v. Rumsfeld. The NDAA of 2011-2012 is therefore nothing new.

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, PO 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.**



"IT'S ON MY MIND.."
Danny H. Parris

Boys and toys

Some of my fondest memories have to do with boy's toys. Every time I look at a box of Cracker Jacks they remind me of White's Little Country Store where I would buy Cracker Jacks that had real toys in them. To open a box of Cracker Jacks was exciting. Sometimes I would get a pair of black magnetic poodles. Sometimes I would get a flat metal top with louvers on the upper side. Most were red, white and blue. You could place the top on a flat surface and blow into the louvers and the top would spin like crazy. Or was it my head that was spinning because of blowing so hard? Occasionally, I would buy wax bottles of flavored drinks. You would bite the wax top off, drink the liquid and chew the candy wax bottle. Sometimes, I would stop outside the store where they emptied the bottle caps from the R C Colas, Cokes and Nehis and take a handful. Some of my cousins and I would dig the cork out of the caps, place the cap on the outside of our shirt, put the cork on the inside of our shirt, and then press the cork with the shirt into the metal cap and we had a neat sheriff's badge. Mr. & Mrs. White always kept a good supply of all the newest candies for little boys and girls. I can still smell that ole country store. Of course, every little boy had one or two "flips" (slingshots) that he had made. You would seek out a good dogwood, hickory nut or sometimes a cherry limb that had branched into a Y-fork for the stock, an old leather shoe tongue to hold your ammunition, and cut two strands of rubber from an old rubber inner tube about 1/2 inch wide and twenty inches long to propel your ammunition, (usually smooth "slag" stones) gathered from the sides of dirt roads or streams. You were more respected if you had one flip with the rubber taken from a red inner tube and one from a

black tube. Many a snake, rat, or lizard met its doom from the skilled hand of a little boy with a flip. Since money was scarce one of the best sources to obtain toys came from saving hundreds of "Write-Write" coupons or "Blue Horse" coupons. These were on the front covers of your notebook paper. The more writing you did the more coupons. You could send these to the Montag Brothers, Inc. located on Marietta Street in Atlanta, Georgia. Prizes ranged from footballs to bicycles. Another of my favorite toys in the summer was to remove the metal band from a discarded wooden barrel, locate a strong, stiff metal wire and bend one end into a suitable handle and the other end into a U-shape on the round band and push that thing all day long. If you started downhill the band would run away from you unless you placed the U-shape on the inside of the band and held it back. Winter and springtime found you reading mind-challenging comic books (funny books) like Roy Rogers, Johnny Mack Brown, Lash LaRue, Gene Autrey, The Lone Ranger and Tonto, along with a host of others. Kites were a big hit in early spring. String collected from every source possible, knotted together and wound on a stick. Two choice maple sticks were obtained. A standard kite had a vertical stick about 48 inches and a horizontal stick about 28 inches. Flour and water were mixed to form a glue to attach an old paper laundry bag to the strings attached to the notched edges of the maple sticks. Different colored "rags" (discarded clothing) were torn in strips and knotted together to form a long tail to balance the kite. When you got really bored you would catch the old Game Rooster, find a long colorful tail feather and pluck it out. You would then find a nice corn cob, push the feather into the center of the cob. You would spend the next minutes/hours throwing the corn cob into the sky and watch the beautiful whirling action as the cob and feather floated back to earth. This is not certified information, but I believe this is where the idea for spaceships began. I sometimes long for "The Friendly Village" days again!



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

I have an on-going love affair with young families and last weekend my wife and I were travelling in eastern Tennessee when a billboard caught my eye. It was a picture of a beautiful mother, in her late 20's I would guess, holding a darling baby in her arms. It was the idyllic mother-child photograph like grandma might have on the mantle.

But what got my attention was the startling caption under the picture that said, "Jenny smokes two packs of cigarettes a day. So does her mother."

After the message sank in I began to realize how profound it was. We used to hear a lot about second hand cigarette smoke, in the workplace, in the mall, on the airlines, etc. Now most public places in the US have taken care of that issue by banning smoking completely or by providing a secluded place where folks can smoke without tainting the air the rest of us breathe.

But how about Jennie? She can't insist that Mom not smoke when they're riding in the car. She can't tell her Mom to go to the breakroom.

Through no choice of her own, her life is being impacted by her Mom's choices.

Then I got to thinking, this is not just about smoking. Most of Mom's choices - and Dad's - affect the kids. When you yell at your spouse, Archie learns a lesson. When you lose your temper over another driver's blunder, Sally learns a lesson. When you swear, Ernie learns a lesson. When you are critical, Sheila learns a lesson.

Ah, but here's the good news - when Mom shows a forgiving spirit, Peggy learns a lesson. When Dad is patient in traffic, Sean learns a lesson. When Mom does a favor for a neighbor, Dale learns a lesson. When Dad asks Mom for forgiveness for unkind words he said, Freida learns a lesson.

Ultimately our kids decide for themselves the kind of people they want to be, but Mom and Dad make it easier or harder for them to get it right by the choices they make in front of their kids every day. It's enough to make you want to stand tall, isn't it?

Send you parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

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