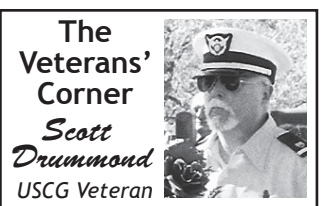


DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## An American Story

I was sent the following condensed history article by "Wallbuilders" in Aledo, TX. Having read it twice, and focusing upon the value of unrevised actual history relating to our unique Sovereign Republic, America, I called and asked for permission to reprint this well written condensation in our *Towns County Herald*. Wallbuilders is noted for first person and nearest to first person actual history books and documentation. David told us to please mention that he wrote this. I cannot begin to compare my historical knowledge or ability to what they do. Today it is extremely important to know, understand, and share what our men and women in uniform stand for!



**The Veterans' Corner**  
Scott Drummond  
USCG Veteran

On March 3, 1931, 86 years ago today, an Act of Congress made the *Star Spangled Banner* America's national anthem. So, in celebration of this important event, we invite you to study the song and the reason it was written.

Following the American Revolution, Americans hoped to live in peace but France and England became engaged in a conflict that drew America back into war. The British captured American ships on the high seas and forced American sailors (around 10,000 of them) to fight for England. The United States declared war. Known as the War of 1812, it lasted until 1815.

In August 1814, England invaded Washington, D.C., setting fire to the Capitol, White House, and other government buildings. The British then marched to Baltimore, MD, and on September 13 began bombarding Fort McHenry.

At that time, attorney Francis Scott Key was aboard a British ship negotiating the release of a friend. Throughout the long night, he watched the attack on Fort McHenry, fearing its fall, but when morning arrived, the American flag was still flying -- the fort had survived the attack.

Inspired by these events, Francis Scott Key wrote down a few lines about the attack while still on board the ship and then wrote several more lines after reaching shore. Shortly thereafter they were published as a poem titled "Defence of Fort M'Henry." Set to music in November of that year, it was named "The Star Spangled Banner."

Americans know the first verse of this song as it's what we sing at sporting events or important occasions, but there is religious content that few know about. Notice especially the fourth verse: O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand, Beweave their lov'd home and the war's desolation! Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n rescued land, Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation! Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, And this be our motto - "In God is our trust," And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave, O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Today, let's celebrate our national anthem in its entirety - an anthem that shows America's strong foundation of religious faith and something we should all be proud to remember!

*Semper Paratus*

## Drought and Fire

The drought and fires of 2016 are disappearing into the distance like the caboose of a train going off into the sunset, but turn around and look at the next locomotive barreling down on us again on the same tracks. This next train is the extreme drought conditions and fire danger that recent rains have lulled us into believing are gone and we are back to normal, but they still here as dangerous as ever, so don't let your guard down because the next event could be just as bad as last fall. The following is the Drought Information Statement Issued by National Weather Service in Atlanta this week. A fairly active weather pattern was in place over the last two weeks, with disturbances and frontal systems impacting the region approximately every three to four days. The most significant rainfall occurred during two events: February 22, and February 28- March 1. During the first event, ample Gulf moisture combined with a slow moving shortwave to produce a prolonged period of stratiform rain, particularly across portions of south and central Georgia. During the second event, convective storms produced moderate to heavy rainfall across far north Georgia. For each of these events, rainfall totals were generally 0.75 to 2 inches, with locally higher amounts. The drought has now surpassed the one-year mark in north Georgia. Recent rainfall has allowed for some improvement across the state, with the shallow soil moisture profile ranging from slightly dry to favorably moist across the state. The deeper soil profile still highlights the severe to extreme drought conditions over portions of north Georgia, even with recent rainfall. Overall, the long-term drought persists with only slight changes over the last two weeks. The extreme drought has expanded to include the top two tiers of counties in far north Georgia, roughly extending from Summerville to Dawsonville, to Toccoa. The severe drought now remains north of a line from Carrollton, to Lilburn, to Elberton. It normally takes at least three consecutive months of above normal rainfall to consider ending a drought. Some significant hydrological impacts to water supply are still occurring and stream flows and ground water tables are very low across many locations in north Georgia and low to near normal in central Georgia. The headwaters of the Chattahoochee river continue to be excessively dry, with some locations upstream of Lake Lanier reporting record low stream flows in the last 14 days. The latest fire danger assessment indicates a high to very high risk across north and central Georgia. Generally, 0.5 to 3.0 inches of total rainfall occurred in the last two weeks across north and central Georgia. The highest rainfall swaths spanned across far northwest and north central Georgia, with rainfall amounts of 1.5 to as much as 4 inches, or 25 to 90 percent of normal. This rainfall assisted in some within-category drought improvement in what has recently been the driest portion of the state. The area that received the least amount of rain extended from Springs to Gainesville to Carnesville, with only 0.1 to 0.5 inches of rain, or 10 to 50 percent of normal, over the last two weeks. The long-term drought is expected to continue through the spring. Current lake levels at USACE Projects were mainly below winter pool levels, ranging from around 5.5 feet below winter pool at Lake Hartwell to around 9 feet below winter pool at Lake Lanier. The pool levels are projected to remain nearly steady for most locations during the next four weeks. At this point in the year, the USACE projects will be in the final months of winter pool levels, or will begin filling lakes to their summer pool elevations, depending on the location. Stream levels across north Georgia over the last 14 days have been much below normal, with normal to below normal stream levels across central Georgia. For March...the outlook for north and central Georgia...above normal temperatures and equal chances of above or below normal precipitation are forecast. 90 Day Outlook...for March through May...above normal temperatures and equal chances of above or below normal precipitation are expected. All this says, we are still in an extreme drought here in North Georgia without much relief in sight for spring and the fire danger quickly jumps from moderate to very high so be on guard, keep your eyes and ears open for rapidly changing weather conditions that can lead to wildfire in your neighborhood, in your yard, and in your home. We want to avoid fires like we had last fall so be on guard, we dodged a bullet, so create defensible space around your home, have a plan to leave, and be Firewise because the house you save might be yours! For more information on Firewise and other fire prevention programs contact Frank Riley at info.ccrd@gmail.com.



**RC&D**  
Frank Riley  
Executive Director

## Nuisance Wildlife

As the weather starts to warm, we are going to start seeing a lot more pests come about, and I'm talking about things much bigger than insects. Woodpeckers, deer, moles/voles and several other animals are starting to frequent our yards in hope of the first tasty growth of spring. While these pests are almost impossible to completely eliminate, you can take measures to reduce the damage they do to your property.



**UGA extension**  
From the Ground Up  
Melissa Mattee

Woodpeckers are probably the most startling and infuriating nuisance we have at the moment. They begin to drum on trees, houses and almost any wooden surface they can find, often starting at dawn. Most of us know that they do this to find insects to eat, but they also drum to attract mates and claim territory. While there is not a way to completely exclude woodpeckers from your property, you can make your house a less appealing surface for drumming. Many wooden framed houses are susceptible to carpenter bee control, and these insects are tasty treats for pileated, red headed and other common woodpeckers. By getting rid of these and other pests that feed on your wood, you will reduce the number of birds coming to your house for food. Other deterrents are primarily scare-based: wind chimes, garden spinners, wind socks and other decorative additions can startle woodpeckers and make them feel unsafe near your home. Birdfeeders should also be placed away from your house if you have a woodpecker problem.

Deer are another common nuisance in the warm weather, and one that I get calls about constantly. While there are many "deer resistant" plants that deer seem not to bother (many herbs and woody plants), deer will eat practically anything if they are hungry enough. They tend to prefer new tender growth and any fruits or berries that plants produce. Anything that is tasty to us is just as tasty to them, which is what makes them such a nuisance! Unfortunately, the only tried and true method to control deer damage is complete exclusion through a tall electric fence. Deer repellants have mixed effectiveness, and any noise makers or other scare tactics quickly lose their effect.

Moles are garden terrors that I've written on several times but always get questions about. Now is the time of year to try to catch damage and new infestations early as they begin to forage on insects and new plant growth. If you have a vole problem, make the landscape less appealing by removing unnecessary mulch, leaf litter and other habitat in which they take refuge. Some small or medium mouse traps baited with peanut butter and sunflower seeds can help to reduce their numbers. Moles however, are more difficult and require traps be set below the surface in their tunnels. Because they mainly feed on earthworms, which we actually want in our soil, you can't easily remove their food source to get them to move on their own. For this reason, trapping and killing is unfortunately the most effective way to resolve the issue.

For other animals that cause damage to your property such as beavers, groundhogs, squirrels, etc, there are licensed trappers in the area that can help get rid of any infestation. For more information on trappers and how to get rid of nuisance wildlife, contact your extension office.

## Letters to The Editor

**Dear Editor:**  
Mr. Groza wrote: "atheists believe a world without God in the picture will solve the world's problems." No, that's only partly what atheists believe. Atheists believe religions are based on fallacy and mythology designed to oppress one group by another more powerful group and by one religion out to vanquish other religions, such as myself, believe God, gods, devils, heaven, hell, boogiemens, spooks, witches and the supernatural are not based on reality. What atheists like myself believe, is that we have a responsibility to understand the real world, nature, society and the universe. And most importantly, I believe we have a duty to fight for a wall of separation between church (mysticism, religious dogma) and state enshrined in the First Amendment of our Constitution. Finally, if Mr. Groza would check the evidence, he would find that those committing suicide are mostly young men and women sent off to fight other religions in oil wars of aggression and occupation. These young men and women in uniform come back traumatized from all the unnecessary killing that they are unable to process and by a deep sense of depression for which no belief in false gods can bring them relief.

Your friendly neighborhood atheist,  
Lance G. Jobson

**To the Editor:**  
Voting Precincts To Be Closed

Three of the county's four voting precincts will soon be closed according to the Towns County Board of Elections. At a public meeting conducted on March 9th in which attendees were largely ignored or discounted, the board announced their intention to close precincts in Macedonia, Tate City and Young Harris, with all future voting to be conducted only in Hiawassee. The board cited an inadequate budget (cannot even afford needed paper clips) and lack of volunteers among justifications for this action. A factual analysis of this proposal reveals that it is logistically impossible. From my observations during the past dozen years when voting in the reasonably efficient precinct at Young Harris, each voter needs at least 15 minutes from entry to exit from the polling place. Assuming that a voter takes only 5 minutes on a voting machine, then each machine could theoretically serve 12 voters in an hour or 144 in a 12-hour shift (7 a.m. to 7 p.m.). In the 2016 general election over 6600 persons voted in the county. Even if 15% voted early or absentee, about 5600 voted in person. That means that if all voting had been conducted in one central location with each voter using only 5 minutes (a very conservative estimate), then 39 voting machines operating non-stop for 12 hours would be required. This presupposes that a large location would be available with enough space to accommodate almost 6000 voters and park their vehicles. Where is there such a space? How much additional driving time, distance and expense would be required of voters? How much waiting time would voters experience? Reasoned voices in the March 9th meeting tried to explain that budgets are living documents that can be amended, but board members insisted they have no input into the budget process. The board also insisted they could not recruit enough poll workers. Yet, when I called them in response to a TCH article before the last election to volunteer my wife and myself, I was told they already had more poll workers than needed and refused us.

This board appears not to have noticed that Americans are increasingly demanding that public office holders work for them, not that we exist to serve the whims of office holders. In an effort to help, I am willing (if justified by the board) to buy them a complimentary 10-year supply of paper clips. I could also help recruit poll workers and can guarantee 2. I urge the board to prepare an alternate proposal specifying resources needed to continue operating 4 precincts and submit it for public review. Since all previous boards have found the means to maintain 4 or more precincts, I am confident this board can also if they are willing.

Wm. Ronald Gibson

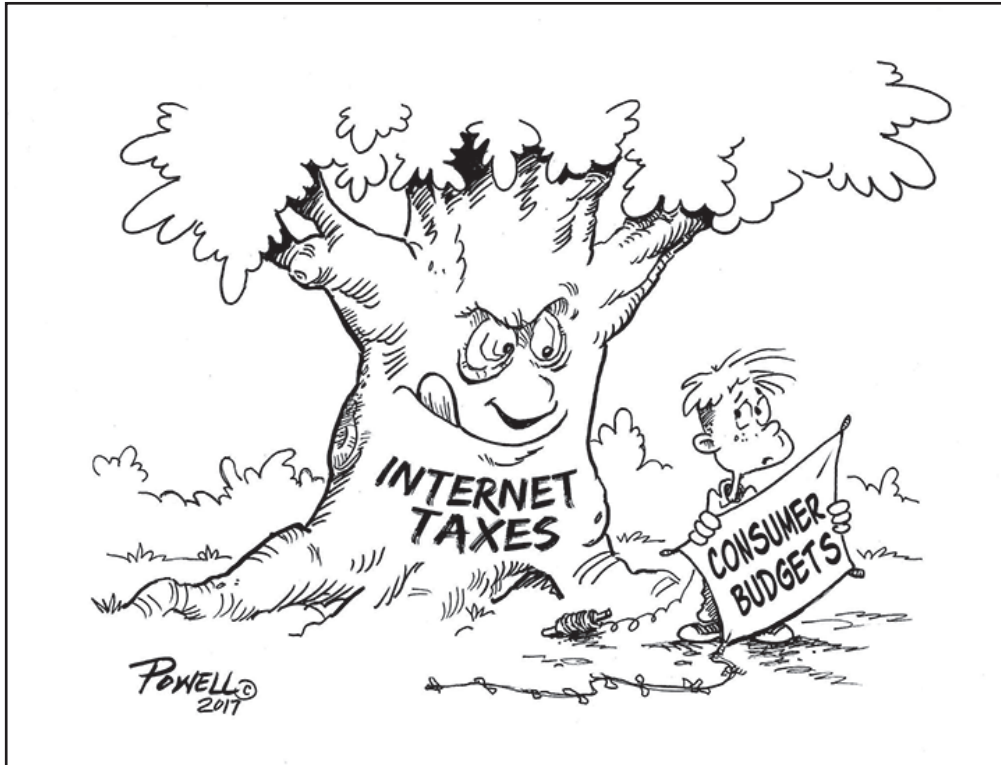
## GUEST COLUMNS

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.**



## Towns County Community Calendar

Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
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Hospital Auxiliary	Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
YH Plan Comm.	YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
MOAA	Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	
Friendship Comm.	Clubhouse	6 pm
Goldwing Riders	Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
Red Cross DAT	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Republican Party	New Senior Ctr.	6:30 pm
Square Dance Club	Rec. Center	7 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

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## Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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