

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Merry Christmas!

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



The embers glowed softly,
 And in their dim light,
 I gazed round the room
 And I cherished the sight.
 My wife was asleep,
 Her head on my chest,
 My daughter beside me,
 Angelic in rest
 Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
 Transforming the yard to a winter delight.
 The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
 Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve
 My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
 Secure and surrounded by love, I would sleep,
 In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
 So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.
 The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
 But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
 Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,
 Then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.
 My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
 And I crept to the door just to see who was near.
 Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
 A lone figure stood his face weary and tight.
 A Marine, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
 Perhaps a soldier, huddled here in the cold.
 Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
 Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.
 "What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
 "Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
 Put down your pack; brush the snow from your sleeve,
 You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"
 For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
 Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts,
 To the window that danced with a warm fire's light.
 Then he sighed and he said "It's really all right,
 I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night."
 "It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
 That separates you from the darkest of times.
 No one had to ask or beg or implore,
 I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before.
 My Gramps died at Pearl on a day in December."
 Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas Gram always remembers."
 "My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam',
 And now it is my turn and so, here I am.
 I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
 But my wife sends me pictures; he's sure got her smile."
 Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
 The red, white, and blue... an American flag.
 "I can live through the cold and the being alone,
 Away from my family, my house and my home
 I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
 I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.
 I can carry the weight of killing another,
 Or lay down my life for my sister or brother,
 Who stand at the front against any and all
 To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."
 "So go back inside," he said, "Harbor no fright,
 Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."
 "But isn't there something I can do, at the least?
 Give you money," I asked, "Or prepare you a feast?
 It seems all too little for all that you've done,
 For being away from your wife and your son."
 Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
 "Just tell us you love us, and never forget
 To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,
 To stand your own watch, no matter how long
 For when we come home, either standing or dead,
 To know you remember we fought and we bled
 Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
 That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

Thanks to Colonel Gibson!
Semper Paratus

A Moment of Clarity

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

The week between Christmas and New Year's Day can be the most enjoyable time of the year. The kids and the grand kids are still home from school and busy making the holiday memories they will cherish the rest of their lives.
 The decorations are still up and the gifts are still new, but the panic is gone, and mom and dad can relax and enjoy a bit of what they worked so hard to put together.
 With the new year fast approaching we become reflective, or some semblance of that in our culture which moves so rapidly, skimming over the surface of the events of our time. We made a lot of history this year, but it's hard to see that when it's still so close at hand.
 All too soon the hyper-connected routines of modern life will return and we will be fully engaged by latest sensations that distract us from the struggle of rolling our stones.
 Perhaps now, while our engines idle and our transmission is in park, we can think about what we learned this year. We're going to need those lessons.
 Partisanship divided the nation again in 2017, driven by the same old desires for power, and the greed which has plagued humanity since the beginning of time. The lesson we can carry forward is this: Politics is a defective tool for informing our worldview.
 We were so angry and positional this year that our moments of clarity were few, but some of us were able to see that belief can function in the brain just like an addictive drug, and anything which threatens to deny us our fix can cause turmoil. Those who know this can manipulate; those who do not are vulnerable.
 The struggle attempts to resolve itself as a pendulum which swings between social and political extremes, and we rarely pause to consider who keeps winding that clock. We had a rare glimpse at the clock-winders this year, and we need to remember that going forward.
 We had an opportunity this year to mature as a culture. Many who were victimized by the powerful were themselves empowered to speak up and to speak truth to that power.
 The lesson we were given was that the constant parade of celebrity, pounding out the drum beat that urges us to follow, is a parade of flawed humans with clay feet.
 We do not have to allow these power players who strut and fret before us to lead us anywhere. They do not represent us. They do not decide our values. They are not the face of our nation, merely a poor reflection.
 If we can only enter the new year with this lesson: that the drama in virtual reality and our unexamined beliefs do not always, or often, represent what is real and true in this world.
 The author, Jonathan Rauch, provides us a useful tool of thought that we can apply to our benefit to the dramas that will be presented in the upcoming year: "A liberal society stands on the proposition that we should all take seriously the idea that we might be wrong."
 This means we must place no one, including ourselves, beyond the reach of criticism; it means that we must allow people to err, even where the error offends and upsets, as it often will."

Well Water Testing

UGA extension
From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



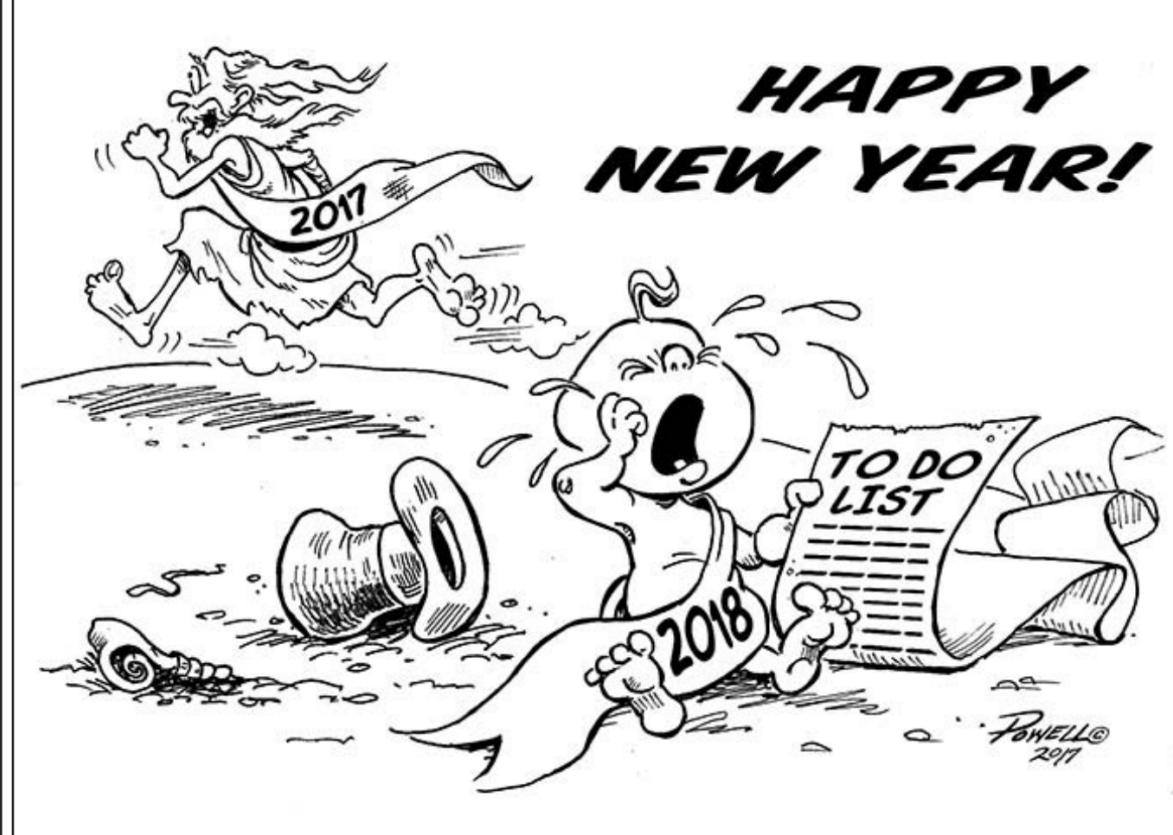
The first thing most of us do after a long day of working outside is pour ourselves a nice glass of water. For many of us, that water comes from a well on our property.
 While you may not have had well problems, it's important to not take well maintenance for granted. Though water may smell fine and taste fine, if the well has not been properly maintained, contaminants may have slipped through, especially after a heavy rain.
 Because of this, it's important to occasionally test your water and check on your well to make sure everything is in the best condition possible.
 The water in our wells comes from rainfall that filters down through the soil and rock layers beneath it. Movement through these layers removes large contaminants such as insects, plant material, and other particles. However, it does not remove metals and bacteria.
 Though most wells and filters that are adequately maintained seldom have any issues filtering these out, certain conditions can cause a higher risk of contamination than others. Shallow wells are more likely than deep wells to become contaminated after a heavy rain.
 Also, wells that are located within 50 feet of a septic tank or within 100 feet of petroleum, manure, pesticide or chemical storage areas are much more likely to have problems.
 Sometimes, a contaminated well does not show any external signs that anything is wrong. However, some common indications are water that stains clothes or sinks and tubs, has a strong odor, has particles floating in it, or a metallic, sour taste.
 Also, if the pH of the water is too high, it could eat away at your pipes, which doesn't contaminate the well but still affects household water. High levels of certain metals, such as copper, can even cause adverse health effects.
 If you do suspect your water is contaminated or are not sure about the status of your well, you can have your water tested by a variety of organizations, including the extension office.
 Water can be submitted for several different tests, but the most common are a basic water test and a bacterial test. The basic water test looks for several metal and mineral contaminants, as well as hardness and pH of the water. The bacterial test shows the presence or absence of any harmful germs possibly contaminating your well.
 For a basic well test, it is important to do what is called a "first draw." This means that you need to take the sample before any other faucets in the house have been used.
 It is recommended to test a kitchen faucet early in the morning, as those are usually the most active faucets in a household.
 For a bacterial test, all faucet attachments, such as nozzles and aerators, must be removed and the neck of the faucet itself must be sterilized using a very specific procedure and container.
 For more information on water testing, please contact your extension office to receive our "Testing for Water Quality" publication.

Letters to The Editor

Thank you, Water Department employees
 Dear Editor,
 Tuesday, December 12, 2017 was a miserably cold, very windy day in Hiawassee. While the City Water Dept. boys were working on a hydrant behind the Hardware store in the afternoon, a water line broke, putting an area downtown without water.
 Those fellas, Carl and Kevin Grizzle, Ryan Osborne, and Richard Green from T.C. Water & Sewer Authority, worked in that horrible wind until 1 a.m., when we in the affected area had water again. Thank you for your dedication! I know I'm speaking for a lot of people.
Joan Crothers, Big Sky Drive resident

Taxes
 Dear Editor,
 From the sound of a recent letter regarding tax reform, one would think the tax reform proposal being considered by Congress will cause every malady from Armageddon to acne. While the tax proposal being considered is far from perfect, it's a start. People need to understand that, in a free economy like ours, when the Government taxes anyone, in a sense they tax everyone. The more taxes a business pays, the more pressure there is to raise prices on consumers, reduce jobs, and/or move offshore, taking the jobs to foreign soil. It's common sense. High income earners by far pay the bulk of federal taxes. Spend a few minutes on irs.gov and you will see that. Don't just take my word for it. Don't fall for the left wing trap of jealousy and resentment of other people or of "corporations". That is counterproductive. The government does not produce prosperity; it is a drag on prosperity. Taxes need to be reduced by whatever means available to allow the free market to thrive and increase prosperity through job growth.
Jim Soltys

Have something to sell?
 Let the Herald work for you!
 Contact us at 706-896-4454
 Deadline for the
 Towns County Herald
 is Friday by 5 PM



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

Bridge Players	Every Monday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Free GED prep.	Every Tuesday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Every Wednesday Red Cross Building	7 pm
Bridge Players	Every Thursday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Friday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Sunday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Mtn. Amat. Radio	First Monday of each month: 1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
Alzheimer's Supp.	First Tuesday of each month: McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	6 pm
Young Harris Coun.	YH City Hall	7 pm
Lions Club	Fourth Tuesday of each month: Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Republican Party	Fourth Thursday of each month: New Senior Ctr.	6:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Last Thursday of each month: Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

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