

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

PO2 (EOD2) Mike Monsoor

The Congressional Medal of Honor on April 8, 2008, Monsoor's parents received the Medal of Honor posthumously, officiated by President George W. Bush in a ceremony at the White House, for giving his life in Iraq, as he jumped on, and covered a live hand grenade with his body, thus saving the lives of a US Navy Seal team that he was assigned to protect on a rooftop in Ramadi, on September 29, 2006. His funeral took place in October 12, 2006 at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego.

During Mike Monsoor's funeral in San Diego, as his coffin was being moved from the SEALs to the grave site at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, SEALs were lined up on both sides of the pallbearers route forming a column of twos, with the coffin moving up the center. As Mike's coffin passed, each SEAL, having removed his gold Trident from his uniform, slapped it down embedding the Trident in the wooden coffin.

The slaps were audible from across the cemetery; by the time the coffin arrived grave side, it looked as though it had a gold inlay from all the Tridents pinned to it. The trident is a U.S. Navy special warfare badge worn by SEALs. It represents the three aspects of SEAL special operations, sea, air, and land.

Excerpted from the SOA (Summary of Action) report: "While vigilantly watching for enemy activity, an enemy fighter hurled a hand grenade onto the roof from an unseen location. The grenade hit him in the chest and bounced onto the deck. He immediately leapt to his feet and yelled "grenade" to alert his teammates of impending danger, but they could not evacuate the sniper hide-sight in time to escape harm.

Without hesitation and showing no regard for his own life, he threw himself onto the grenade, smothering it to protect his teammates who were lying in close proximity. The grenade detonated as he came down on top of it, mortally wounding him.

Petty Officer Monsoor's actions could not have been more selfless or clearly intentional. Of the three SEALs on that rooftop corner, he had the only avenue of escape away from the blast, and if he had so chosen, he could have easily escaped. Instead, Monsoor chose to protect his comrades by the sacrifice of his own life.

By his courageous and selfless actions, he saved the lives of his two fellow SEALs and he is most deserving of the special recognition afforded by awarding the Medal of Honor."

Thanks to a suggestion by Katie Harkins, American Legion Auxiliary, and District 9 Chaplain.

As a public service, very important, please be aware that there is a horrible influenza epidemic affecting so many Americans.

Wash hands often and if you recognize any symptoms be very cautious about spreading what may be some sort of flu to others. Our tri-county area has been hit hard.

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Wildfire Home Risk Assessment

It's hard to believe after all of the cold, wet weather that we have had for the past month or so that dry times are a 'coming and all of the leaves left from the fall are right where they fell around our homes and buildings just waiting for a spark to burst into flames.

When the February and March winds start blowing these leaves will turn into dry fuel that makes March and April two of our most dangerous wildfire months here in the mountains. We should start making plans now to reduce these risks so when conditions change it won't be too late to protect our homes. It could be as simple as a leaf pile burning when a puff of wind throws an ember into the dry leaves around the base of your house or into the leaf filled gutters.

We don't get a "do over" once the smoke starts and we are in the defensive mode trying to stop what we could have prevented with a little planning back in January. There are three threats or exposures that a building can experience during a wildfire, grassfire, or brushfire: windborne embers, radiant heat, and direct flame contact. When considering the vulnerability of your home or business to wildfire, you need to evaluate and address all three potential exposures.

Ember exposure is considered the most important, because most building ignitions have been attributed to them. Embers can ignite building components and contents directly or ignite vegetation and other combustible items adjacent to or near a building; this then can result in a radiant heat and/or direct flame contact exposure.

For example, embers may land on and ignite debris that has accumulated in your gutter. The burning debris then causes direct flame contact on the edge of the roof. Or, embers that ignite nearby vegetation could result in a radiant heat exposure to the side of a building, potentially igniting combustible siding or breaking the glass in a window. The opening from broken glass then would allow embers to enter the building and ignite combustible materials, such as carpeting or furniture.

What to know to better protect your home from wildfire - SLOPE - The slope of the land around your home is a major consideration in assessing wildfire risk. Wildfires burn up a slope faster and more intensely than along flat ground. A steeper slope will result in a faster moving fire, with longer flame lengths. Homes located under- or top of a slope (without set back) are generally more vulnerable because of increased flame length and intensity of a fire moving up the slope.

Depending on the location of your home, defensible space may need to be increased. ZONE 1 - 5 ft. around the perimeter. The objective of this zone is to reduce the chance of wind-blown embers from a nearby fire landing near the home, igniting combustible debris or materials and exposing the home to flames. This zone is closest to the house, so it requires the most careful selection and management of vegetation and other materials.

ZONE 2 -30 ft. around the perimeter (or to the property line) The objective of this zone is to create and maintain a landscape that, if ignited, will not readily transmit fire to the home. Trees and shrubs in this zone should be in well-spaced groupings and well maintained.

Ladder fuels (i.e., shorter vegetation or shrubs under taller trees) should be avoided to prevent the fire from climbing into the crown or upper portions of trees. If these groupings were to be ignited by wind-blown embers, the resulting fire should not be able to threaten the home by a radiant heat exposure or by flames being able to touch the exterior surfaces of your home.

ZONE 3 - 100 ft. (or to the property line). The objective of vegetation management in this zone is to reduce the energy and speed of the wildfire.

Tree and brush spacing should force the fire in the tops of the tree, brush, or shrub crowns to drop to the ground. Flame length should decrease.

To learn more about how to reduce your risk from a wildfire, call the Georgia Forestry Commission and schedule a free home assessment for your property and help make your home Firewise.

Chestee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council is Georgia's Firewise Liaison, a core Fire Adapted Communities Network member, and Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition administrator spreading wildfire risk reduction programs across Georgia, western North Carolina, and Southwestern Virginia helping communities learn how to reduce the risk of wildfires that can destroy their neighborhoods and dramatically change their way of life.

For more information on Chestee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council and programs, visit our website www.chestchattcd.org and www.appcfac.org and check us out on Facebook or email at www.info.ccrd@fmail.com.

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.

RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



Fruit Trees part II

Whether you want a sweet apple tree for the grandkids to pick from, or you want a peach or plum tree to make pies from, there are a variety of fruit trees that do well in our area. The major steps to having a productive fruit harvest are the three p's: picking, pollination, and pruning. If you know the basics of these three important characteristics, you will have plenty of fruit for yourself, your family and even your neighbors!

The most common fruit trees I see up here are, of course, apples. A wide variety of apple trees do well in the North Georgia mountains, but red cultivars are the most resistant to diseases such as cedar apple rust. Apples ripen throughout late summer and early fall, and are perfect to pick when their color has peaked and they are easily plucked off the stems. Though it may be tempting to prune your apple trees after the fruit and leaves have dropped, the ideal pruning time is in early February. Remove any diseased or dead wood and any branches that are rubbing against each other. You always want to take back about one third of the tree's volume to allow for air flow and to maintain structural integrity. Finally, always make sure you have multiple apple trees that flower at the same time. If you only have one tree, you will not have any fruit because it will not be pollinated.

Pears are also a common tree grown here. Unlike apples, they need to be picked before they are ripe. A good rule of thumb is to pick them when you can see little brown dots (lenticels) appearing on the skin. Early February is also the best time to prune these trees, and you will definitely need to prune them because their branches grow almost straight up and form narrow crotches. Just like with all trees, you want good air flow through the canopy to prevent disease. Even if a pear may be advertised as "self-fertile", it is good to have at least two that flower at the same time to increase your fruit yield. More pollination always means more tasty fruit!

Despite the fact that North Georgia is not traditionally considered a suitable site for fig trees, I have seen several varieties such as Hardy Chicago, Celeste and some Brown Turkey do well in the area. Figs ripen throughout the warm summer months into fall, depending on environmental conditions. Again, late winter is the ideal time to prune as figs typically yield better when they are kept a little short instead of growing into a large tree. February is also a good time to make cuttings. If you are unsure of what variety to get, the best thing may be to ask a friend or neighbor with a successfully producing fig tree if you can take a cutting to propagate your own tree. Cuttings should be made from one year old wood and should be about eight to ten inches long. If you already have a fig tree and it is not producing, there could be a few reasons. Figs take several years to mature and bear fruit, and dry hot weather can make them take even longer.

Union and Towns County Extension will be hosting the annual Vegetable Production meeting Wednesday, February 28th from 5:00pm to 8:30pm at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. Pesticide credit is available. Dinner will be provided, so RSVP to 706-439-6030 to ensure your meal is reserved.

For more information on other fruit trees for our area, contact the extension office.

UGA extension
From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

This Is My Home

Dear Editor,
Just imagine driving along a busy road and overtaking a man (no longer young) with a "trash grabber" in one hand and two five-gallon buckets in the other. He is busy picking up roadside litter that perverse, inconsiderate drivers from Towns and Union counties, North Carolina and Florida have thrown out of their vehicles.

That man would be me!
For several years I have informally adopted a two-mile stretch of Gum Log Road between the fire station in Union County and the Many Forks Church in Towns County and now spend 2-3 hours every week walking part of that road picking up roadside litter.

I am the 6th generation of my family to live in this valley. Although I took a 42-year absence for school, a military career and secondary employment, we built our dream home here and have been full-time residents again for more than 13 years.

Desiring to be more than "just another set of wheels on the road", I began collecting litter and operating the Neighborhood Recycling Program in an effort to improve the appearance of our community.

Gum Log Road with its feeder roads is a busy highway with hundreds of passing vehicles every day. A sizeable fraction of those travelers are persons who have grown to adulthood without ever learning some of the basic principles of civilization such as owning and using trash cans.

In fact, some seem to believe that highways were built with wide shoulders just to provide a place for them to throw their trash. Most smoke cigarettes, drink beer and eat fast food.

Although 12-14 miles away, all of the fast food restaurants in town are well represented by abandoned styrofoam cups, food scraps and packaging.

I want anyone who passes this way to clearly understand that we are not trashy people although we must share the planet with some others who are.

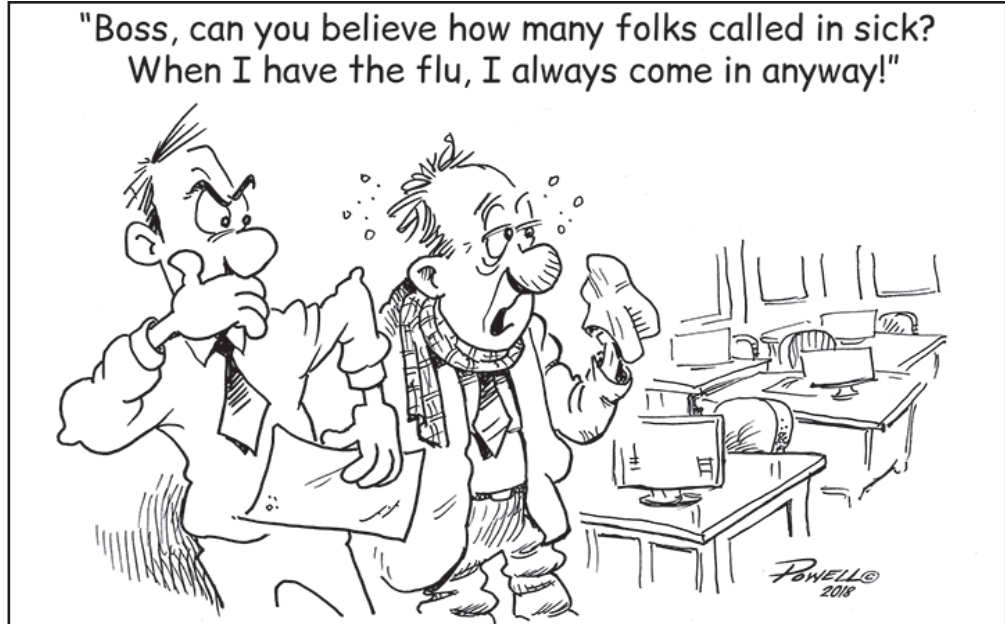
While mine is a hopeless job (there will always be more litterers) I will continue for as long as I am able to stand and walk. This is my home and I am proud of it.

Wm. Ronald Gibson

**Have something to sell?
Let the Herald work for you!**



Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM • 706-896-4454



Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Wednesday	
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	First Monday of each month:	
Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
	First Tuesday of each month:	
Alzheimer's Supp.	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
	Second Monday of each month:	
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Tuesday of each month:	
Caregiver support	Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Calvary Church	4 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
	Second Wednesday of each month:	
Basket Weavers	SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	67 Lakeview Cir., Ste. A	4 pm
	Second Thursday of each month:	
CVB Board	Rec Center	9 am
Awake America Prayer	Civic Center	Noon
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
	Last Thursday of each month:	
Humane Shelter Bd.	Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

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Towns County Herald

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