DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

She Stepped up for America

She clearly didn't even need to. But like so many of our Greatest Generation she stepped up to serve our Amer-



ican ideals and something far greater than self. We are loosing these wonderful folks due to natural aging processes at a fast pace. We simply cannot forget them and we must honor them as examples of the way we all should strive to be, for each other and America. Betty White was called Home only two and one half weeks prior to her 100th birthday, on December 31, 2021. Personally, I knew little about her, other than when Sherry watched some of her comical appearances on several different older TV shows. She was unique and had great talent as a comical, always smiling, sometimes silly character. I have learned that Betty White was an extremely popular and well loved actor who had an Eight decade long career, entertaining many Americans

However, and of extreme importance to our nation, overshadowing her plethora of TV appearances is her voluntary service to our USA in time of need, WWII. Here's an excerpt from our United States Army and the Army's official honor for Betty White: "We are saddened by the passing of Betty White. Not only was she an amazing actress, she also served during WWII as a member of the American Women's Voluntary Services. A true legend on and off the screen."

Betty White began working as an actress and model in the late 1930s, her aspirations were put on hold during the Second World War. A month before her 20th birthday in 1941, she went to work with the American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS).

The AWVS provided women volunteers to offer services such as ambulance and truck driving, fire-fighting, aircraft-spotting, navigation, and aerial photography.

In a 2010 interview with Cleveland magazine, White talked about her assignment, driving a truck of supplies to barracks in the Hollywood Hills, and attending dances for the troops ahead of their deployments abroad. Wonder how many young men of that era were inspired by Betty in those dances' In spite of sounding chauvinistic, Betty White volunteered to use her skills and tools that God graced her with as a young lady of small stature to serve America and our fight for freedom, and survival. She is not just another Hollywood icon, Betty White is an icon for our Greatest Generation. May she rest in glorious eternity, with her beloved husband, Allen Ludden. She had called out his name just before passing on 31 December 2021 leaving us peacefully in her sleep. Our truly Greatest Generation continues to leave. It thus becomes every American's duty to emulate our greatest elders and pass along their character and selflessness to our Youth.

Perhaps an admonition from Ms. White? "It was a strange time and out of balance with everything," White told Cleveland "which I'm sure the young people are going through now. We'll never learn. We'll never learn.

Semper Paratus

Letters to The Editor

Hamilton Gardens in Good Hands Dear Editor,

I have been a frequent visitor to the Hamilton Gardens for years. While on a recent walk through the gardens, I took notice of all the clearing and cleaning that the new staff is doing. It looks great! The newly installed landscaping in the parking lot is very professionally done and looks much nicer too. I love the new rock work and the stage makes more sense placed on the lawn than sitting in the parking lot. I spoke with the new Curator about all the changes; she has a wonderful vision for the future of the Hamilton Gardens. What I don't understand is all the anger and hatred directed at such a beautiful place - it truly makes no sense. The previous management made their decision to dissolve their business. Change was bound to happen. Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds definitely chose the right person for the job!



The Invisible Wall

Outside

The Box

By: Don Perry

Anyone who writes can tell you about the invisible wall of writer's block that can appear between the first sentence of a composition and a deadline. It showed up for me this week like Bill Murray's clock radio alarm in the movie *worldoutsidethebox.com* 'Groundhog Day.'

Isn't it true, that since the beginning of the "plague years," a certain sameness has crept into our day to day awareness and custom? Infection rates have increased, new variant appeared, politician reacts to, celebrity reacts to...haven't we heard all this before? Haven't I written all THIS before??

I stood at the kitchen window looking out over my cup of coffee trying to erase the voices of Sonny and Cher from my head, and standing just above the bird feeder I saw three whitetail deer. Now there was something new! Then I noticed an Eastern Towhee on the feeder with the Carolina Chickadees, and thought, "What are you doing this far north in January buddy? I'd better check the bird guidebook.'

The sun was just coming over the ridge in the east, casting a medley of shadows beneath the laurels. The mountain wore a mantle of hoarfrost which glistened in the morning light, wisps of cloud streaming into clear blue sky. The evil spell was broken.

I think the first step on my path to release was closing the laptop on my way to that window. Trying to stay informed today is like tending a fire. If you get too close, or linger too long, you will get very uncomfortable at the least, or burned at worst.

It takes some effort, and focus, to navigate the polluted waters of the Pixel Ocean, even more to fish in them. Use a net and you're going to find a lot of garbage in your catch. Use a pole instead, like an angler.

In that spirit, my recent media burn inspired some new efforts, and I found a news aggregator that actually seems to work. I've tried Google's version, and the results always seem tainted by their efforts to spy on me and sell me things. Microsoft's version seems intent on slyly injecting social engineering into my results, but that could also be the effect of corporate media's intent to push a political agenda and the cringe-worthy efforts of fragile academia to disseminate discredited and repackaged Marxist ideas.

There is a news aggregator available on the news360 website which has, so far, been very promising. When I block a celebrity topic, for example, it stays blocked rather than being reintroduced in a slightly different form. My news feed is now tightly focused on the topics that interest me, like physics, , weather, geology and, of course, recipe finance

Radon Awareness Month

Janu-**UGA** ary is national radon action month. Many and Working Georgians spend these Jacob cold months Williams huddled inside



waiting for a warmer spring. This makes it even more important that we test our homes for radon, a colorless, odorless gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

In Union county, about 46 percent of homes have elevated levels of the naturally radioactive gas radon. In Towns County, it is 36%. Over the course of many years, exposure to this gas can cause lung cancer even in nonsmokers. In fact, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Smokers, current and former, exposed to radon gas have an even greater risk of developing lung cancer. Radon is a naturally occurring gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Often granite rock naturally has high lev-

els of uranium, which is part of why radon is such a persistent problem in Georgia, the gas seeps out of the soil and up through crawlspaces, foundations, and basements into a home. About 800 Georgians die annually from radon induced lung cancer.

Fortunately, testing for radon gas is simple and inexpensive. You hang a short-term radon test in the lowest living level of your home for three to seven days, and then mail it to the laboratory for analysis. In a few days, you will receive the test results. If the radon level in your home is high (4 picocuries per liter or above), you can have a certified radon mitigation professional install a radon reduction system that will reduce the indoor radon level. The system most frequently used is a vent pipe system and fan that pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside.

A radon test kit can be obtained from the UGA Radon Program (radon.uga.edu) or a hardware store. During the month of January, Georgia residents will receive \$5 off the cost of purchasing a radon test kit online by using the code NRAM2022 at checkout. You can also purchase a radon test kit at the Union or Towns county Extension office for \$10.

Radon may also be found in drinking water. This is primarily a concern with private well water. In Georgia, wells drilled into granitic crystalline rock aquifers, usually in the northern part of the state, are at risk of naturally occurring radon contamination. This is where the uranium that decays to radon can be found at higher levels. To learn more about radon in water in your county visit aesl.ces.uga.edu/water/map/. If you are interested in radon in water, test kit contact your county Extension office.

Radon is a real concern for where we live. Thankfully, more and more people have become aware of the problem that it presents. Mitigating radon in home that has finished construction can be expensive. If you are in the process of building a home consider installing a mitigation system, as it is cheaper to have the system installed before a house is completed. If you have questions about radon, you can contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.williams@uga.edu.

A Hand up, not a Hand Out

Many of you reading this column come from long lines of families that are or were homeowners. That, however, is not the case for many other families in Union and Towns Counties, here in Georgia. According to a quick internet search, it seems



that around 23% of Union County adult residents and 22% of Towns County adult residents rent their homes. Some, of course, rent by choice, others out of necessity. You may not have given much thought to it, but owning a home is proven to have a wideranging impact on a family, in ways that you may not have considered. People who own homes are much more likely to stay in their homes longer than those who rent. This provides stability to families, because they aren't moving around often. Parents become more involved in their communities. Children do better in school when provided with a stable environment. Home ownership comes with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Habitat for Humanity has developed a model that helps families become homeowners, when they normally would not be able to accomplish this in a conventional way. For example, potential Habitat families don't just buy houses, they become "Habitat Partner Families." The Families don't need a huge down payment (which is often 10% of the home's value). Instead, their down payment is \$1500. This down- payment amount is due at closing, but can be paid in smaller increments from the time a family is selected, until the date of closing. Partner Families are required to donate 350 hours of work on the building of their home, someone else's home, construction repair projects, or working in the ReStore. Since it usually takes about a year from the time a family is selected until the time they move into their home, there is plenty of time for this to be accomplished. Partner families are offered support all along the way, from the time they fill out the application for home ownership all the way until they pay off their 20-year mortgage. There is always someone from the Family Support Committee available to answer any questions a family may have, and offer help when situations arise. There are credit counselors available to help families learn how to best spend their money, the best way to raise their credit scores, and handle things like bank accounts. credit cards, and bill-paying. The best part of this Habitat program is its lasting effects. Some of our homeowners sell their homes, and move on to bigger and better situations. Homeownership becomes "generational", meaning that the children who grow up in stable housing tend to further their education beyond high school, potentially moving into careers that pay more. They tend to become homeowners themselves. Their children follow their examples. Habitat offers "a hand up, not a hand out".

Phoebe Seay

Daffodil Project, A Shameful End

Dear Editor,

In 2017, our local Jewish residents, and Towns County, were honored to be selected as a location for the Children's Daffodil Project. The garden site was to be at Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, Inc. Initiated by Am Yisrael Chai, a nonprofit Holocaust Education and Awareness organization, the purpose of the Daffodil Project is to build a worldwide living Holocaust Memorial with the planting of 1.5 million daffodils around the globe in honor and loving memory of those 1.5 million children who were murdered in the Holocaust.

It was our honor to plant 600 bulbs for 600 children in a location blessed by a Rabbi and contained within the existing Memorial Garden, a perfect location. Each bulb planted was represented by a lost child's biography, so this was a very personal project. A beautiful dedication of this Garden was held on April 15, 2018, which is the International Day of Observance of the Holocaust and many local residents attended the program

Today, this garden is gone; the bulbs uprooted; the area smoothed over; all evidence of the Children's Daffodil Garden is gone

Management of Hamilton Gardens reverted to Georgia Mountain Fair in November, 2020 and a staff was hired to operate the garden under the umbrella of a "Gardens Committee", chaired by Terry Taylor.

In spite of the fact that information was provided to this committee and others, asking them to honor and respect all of the special garden projects, funded and planned by community donors, including the Children's Daffodil Project, it did not happen

Does the Gardens Committee have a plan, does it include the eradication of all previous work? Who is responsible, and better yet, who is accountable? The destruction of the Children's' Daffodil Project is beyond being shameful and disrespectful of the children honored here. This is an act of desecration of a sacred site.

It feels as if these children were murdered a second time.

Grace Howard

Former volunteer at Hamilton Gardens

Towns County Herald

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I've also rediscovered as new, something very old: The binding of ideas and factual information onto stacks of paper. It's odd that they became invisible for so long, since one wall of my office is covered with these bindings. I find it very convenient that they are so near, now that they are so needed. Ironic, isn't it, that an invisible wall of writer's block could exist within an arm's reach of an invisible wall of books.

With that thought I bid you farewell for now, my friends, in this first month of the new year. We'll do our best to push through those invisible walls of thought and habit this year, so "Put your little hand in mine, there ain't no hill or mountain we can't climb ... " Sorry about that. Think of something else, fast, before it gets stuck in your head!

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 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.

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