

# Towns County Herald

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## Memorial Day Service honors America's fallen

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 hosted a touching Memorial Day Ceremony at the Towns County Veterans Memorial Park on Monday, May 30, with about 100 veterans, their families and guests attending.

Also participating were VFW Post 7807 Auxiliary; American Legion Post 23, the Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 23, and American Legion Riders; Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment 78; North Georgia Honor Guard; and the Sons of Liberty Riders of North Carolina.

Local singing sensation Summer Rahn of Hiawassee made a special appearance to perform the American National Anthem at the Posting of the Colors and "God Bless the U.S.A." following the Laying of the Wreaths.

In the invocation, local VFW Chaplain Dwight Moss said the number 22 was printed on his shirt to signify that an average of 22 veterans commit

suicide every day, and he asked for prayers for veterans suffering from military service-related mental and medical issues that lead to suicide.

"Over the decades and centuries, you have given us great patriots to maintain our freedom. We thank you for those who died that we may be free," prayed Moss. "Thank you, Father, for the blood of the patriots. Let us not wade in it or trample on the bodies of the warriors that have died for us. Like Jesus, Father, many gave all."

"Help us to hold close to our heart the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. Father, men and women have died for the freedom that our flag represents. Help us to maintain that allegiance to one nation under God."

"And, Father, we hold up to you that 22 veterans each day that commit suicide. I pray for your comfort and peace for them and their families. And now, Father, on this day of remembrance, turn your face again toward us and toward this

See Memorial Day, Page 3A



Local patriots saluting the American flag in the May 30 Memorial Day Service, an annual event held at the Towns County Veterans Memorial Park to honor the men and women who have given all in the name of freedom. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Foster Park hosts patriotic 'Cost of Freedom Tribute'



The Cost of Freedom Tribute spanned the entire football field at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center of Foster Park over the weekend. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jeremy Foster  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – For the time ever on Friday, June 3, Towns County welcomed the Cost of Freedom Traveling Wall Tribute at the Foster Park football field to

serve as an educational outdoor exhibit and community event honoring "those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice."

The tribute is a massive mobile panel display that travels between different cities and states to present the names of those heroes who have fallen in service to their country over

decades of America's various wars and conflicts.

Among the dozens of panels were tributes to World War I and World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, Cold War, the USS Pueblo, the Iran hostage crisis, El Salvador War, Beirut, the Grenada Invasion,

See Cost of Freedom, Page 3A

## VFW, family honor WWII veteran Vaughn Barrett

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Having turned 101 last month, Vaughn Barrett is the oldest living veteran in Towns County, where he's been a resident since his birth in 1921, although he is admittedly well-traveled.

On May 31, family members and fellow veterans gathered in the Activity Center at Chatuge Regional Nursing Home, where the World War II vet resides, to honor his achievements and long life in the wake of Memorial Day celebrations.

These friends, who affectionately refer to the centenarian as their brother, were members of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807. They endured combat in places like Vietnam and the Middle East, but none had experienced anything quite like Barrett's military career.

When Barrett was just 17 in the late 1930s, he joined up with the Civilian Conservation Corps and helped his fellow man, but in 1942, things changed. The CCC was shut down due to World War II, and



World War II Veteran Vaughn Barrett, seated, with daughters Karen Gallogly and Mitzi Walker for a special recognition at Chatuge Regional Nursing Home last week. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Barrett had to look elsewhere for work.

In the seven years he worked in the CCC, he managed to accomplish a lot of good by building houses and shelters along the Appalachian Trail. He also went out West to

Oregon and cleared passes to Crater Lake.

"One of the things that I remember Vaughn telling me is, he didn't make a whole lot of money, but when he got paid, they took \$5 of his pay and sent

See Vaughn Barrett, Page 3A

## Blairsville Scottish Festival to return June 11-12 after hiatus



The last time the Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games took place was in 2018, so be sure to check out the return of festivities this weekend! Photo/North Georgia News

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – Soon, the North Georgia Mountains will celebrate the Scottish heritage of Appalachia with the annual Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games, set to return this weekend, June 11-12, after a lengthy three-year hiatus.

The staging area will once again be Meeks Park, where, according to Festival Public Relations Chair Pam Fink, the entire park will be used in some shape or form, with hours running 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. this Saturday and Sunday. Before COVID, in 2019,

Meeks Park flooded and rendered early summer events impossible this year, including the Scottish Festival. Hope for the next year turned into disappointment and fear when the pandemic struck, wiping out the possibilities of a return in 2020 and 2021.

But now, with pandemic restrictions having largely lifted in 2022, organizers are hopeful that things are indeed starting to get back to normal.

"We usually have between 3,000 and 5,000 people," Fink said. "All the festivals and things that I've been to this year seem to have even higher attendance (than normal). People are dying to get out, but when you

haven't had it in three years, you don't know."

Fortunately, people can expect a return to what the festival does best in 2022, with all the tried-and-true Scottish fare making a comeback, including the Highland Games, which will boast a record-breaking number of female athletes this year.

"We've got 13, and two of them are world champions," Fink said.

Also returning this year are 38 participating clans and over 30 vendors, along with animal activities like falconry demonstrations on the main field and border collies herding

See Scottish Festival, Page 8A

## Fire Department conducts fire training, demolition at YHC

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

On Saturday, May 21, the Towns County Fire Department teamed up with area agencies to conduct live fire training and demolition at the old Grace Rollins Dining Hall of Young Harris College, with additional training and demolition on part of the old Duckworth Library May 24.

Prior to the burns, the college conducted several engineering studies and determined that renovating the old dining hall and library was not feasible, so college officials decided to undertake an organized demolition of the closely adjacent buildings to convert the land to green space.

Once the decision to demolish was made, Ray Lambert from the YHC Board of Trustees approached Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland to see if he was interested in assisting for fire training purposes, and the chief jumped at the opportunity.

The Fire Department collaborated with the college throughout the extensive demolition planning process, with wind and other conditions lining up just right over the two days of burning to enable fire-



A firefighter looks on as the controlled burn of the old Grace Rollins Dining Hall rages on Saturday, May 21, at Young Harris College. Photo/Submitted

fighters from across the region to experience various types of training.

Copeland reached out to multiple area fire departments, with responses from Union, Fannin and White counties, plus Clay County, North Carolina, all wishing to share in the "historic days of training that many don't have a chance to participate in."

Union County Fire took part in several interior training modules, including disoriented firefighter ventilation, forcible

entry and others, and Towns, Clay and Fannin conducted the actual controlled burn on May 21, with Towns and Clay accomplishing the May 24 burn.

"I found it to be a great training opportunity," Copeland said. "The live fire aspect gave us training in pump operations, ladder operations, ground ladder techniques, shuttle operations, suppression techniques, exposure protection. So, with the dining hall, we were able to do nearly the

See Fire Training, Page 3A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Lake Levels  
Blue Ridge 1,687.03  
Chatuge 1,925.91  
Nottely 1,777.21

Inside  
Arrests 2A  
Church 4B  
Classifieds 6B  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 6B  
Obits 5B



Presents  
"Acoustic Sunsets"  
at Hamilton Gardens  
See page 8A



Democratic  
Primary Runoff  
Early Voting  
Info  
See page 1B

VFW Fish Fry  
June 10 & 24  
See page 7B



Quilt of Valor  
Recipient  
See page 8B





# Memorial Day...from Page 1A

ation. May your countenance rest upon her and lead us, Father, to keep her free.”

VFW Post 7807 Cmdr. John Harkins introduced the keynote speaker, retired U.S. Navy Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dan Healy, who serves as VFW Post 7807 Quartermaster.

“My name is Dan Healy, and as the keynote speaker, on the inside of the program, you can see my bio. I’m not going to talk about that,” said Healy. “We’re not here to talk about me or any other living veterans.

“We’re here to talk about the 405,399 (Americans) who died in World War II, the 33,606 who died in Korea, the 58,209 who died in Vietnam – that’s four times the population of Towns County by the 2020 census – the 4,404 who died in Iraq, and the 1,086 who died in Afghanistan.

“That’s who we’re here to remember,” said Healy.

“Memorial Day, which has its origins around 1866 and was originally named Decoration Day, was meant to commemorate those lives lost during the (American) Civil War,” Healy said. “And that’s all it was up until World War I, and at World War I they expanded it to include anybody who died in the service of our great nation.

“So now, 156 years after the Civil War, I stand before you on this proud day of remem-

brance and ask that you join me in not only remembering those who made the ultimate sacrifice, but in truly reflecting on their legacy.

“There has been no other nation on Earth whose sacrifice has been greater than ours. So, as we stand together today, we are reminded of the true cost of freedom. And while we, as a nation, mourn the lives lost, we celebrate the lives lived and are forever grateful.

“Above all, in our attempt to pay back our debt as American citizens, we must not only remember the fallen, but it is our responsibility to teach our youth that nothing comes without a cost, and that sacrifices are meaningless without remembrance.

“So, as we leave here today, let us recommit to keeping the memory of our fallen alive. Let us ensure our youth understand at an early age that their freedom was paid forward at great expense. Let us work to educate others on the true meaning of Memorial Day. And let us vow to stand up for those who are unable to stand up for themselves.

“God bless all of our departed heroes and their families,” said Healy. “And God bless America.”

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson, and Chief Deputy



Various local Veterans Service Organizations took part in the Laying of Memorial Wreaths tradition at the Towns County Memorial Day Service last week. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Gene Moss were among the attendees at the ceremony.

“Cliff has always been nice enough to help me get involved in the community, and I really appreciate it,” said Rahn. “I try to make it a point to come to and acknowledge any patriotic events.

“Patriotism) is being forgotten over time with the new generations coming up. I like to make it a point to remember just why we are here today. I try to make it a statement to come out and meet all these people. I’m grateful to be here, and I’m grateful to be an American.”

# Cost of Freedom...from Page 1A

Libya Air Attack, USS Stark Attack and Panama Invasion.

Then there was recognition of Desert Storm/Shield, Somalia, Khobar Towers, the USS Cole and Fort Hood attacks.

The 911 Tribute commemorated the casualties from the Twin Towers and Flights 11, 77, 93 and 175, along with a summary of the terror attacks, and the Afghanistan and Iraq Warrior tributes featured explanations with casualty names, timelines and Medals of Honor.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw welcomed everyone Friday morning in an emotional opening ceremony for the three-day exhibit, which ran June 3-5.

With assistance from an anonymous donor, on behalf of the county, Bradshaw contacted the veteran-owned nonprofit American Veterans Traveling Tribute to bring the display to North Georgia.

Dr. Wade Lott, senior pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, offered an invocation in the opening ceremony, and the North Georgia Honor Guard posted the colors at the display.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 Cmdr. John Harkins led the Pledge of Allegiance, Summer Rahn sang the National Anthem, and Harkins took back over to introduce the keynote speaker for the occasion, retired U.S. Army Maj. Bob Bischoff, a Ranger Hall of Famer.

Bischoff focused on the importance of honoring veterans and remembering the sacrifices of those service men and women who have, time and time again since this country’s founding, paid the ultimate



Retired U.S. Army Maj. Bob Bischoff, a Ranger Hall of Famer, delivered the keynote address at the Cost of Freedom Opening Ceremony on Friday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

price for guaranteeing the freedoms that all Americans hold dear.

And that was the point of the Cost of Freedom Tribute, to highlight those sacrifices by memorializing the names of the brave people who made them, and the event was all the more fitting due to its proximity to Memorial Day having been observed earlier in the week.

District 50 State Sen. Bo Hatchett was also in attendance to share patriotic sentiments concerning veterans and what their service meant to him that day and every day.

“The fact that this wall is as long as the football field with all of these names on it leaves me nearly speechless and utterly humbled,” Hatchett said. “You can truly appreciate the ultimate sacrifices people gave for our freedoms to have events like this today, and I am grateful to honor all of our veterans.

“We have always learned our history and been told and read all about these wars, but with this wall, now we actually

see it.”

The North Georgia Honor Guard offered a rifle salute to the fallen, Towns County Sheriff’s Maj. Eric Wood held a closing prayer, and VFW Cmdr. Harkins signaled the retiring of the colors.

After the ceremony, Harkins, who served as a naval radar operator during the Vietnam era, said that “we need to have an awakening in this country.”

“This country started with the American Revolution, and we have fought through so many wars over the years, and though a lot of people know our history, it is important to have these types of ceremonies so our younger generation can become more aware of how we got to where we are today,” Harkins said.

The North Georgia News and Towns County Herald would like to thank all military service members – past, present and future – for putting their lives on the line for the preservation of the United States of America.

# Vaughn Barrett...from Page 1A



Multiple local veterans visited with Vaughn Barrett last week in honor of his status as the oldest living veteran in Towns County. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

it back to his mom,” said John Gallogly, Barrett’s son-in-law. “That’s one way he could support his family.”

Barrett began his military career in his early 20s, enlisting with the U.S. Army to become part of the 544th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. Then just a private, he was assigned to Company D Shore Battalion.

In 1943, at Camp Edwards in Massachusetts, Barrett learned the tactics of both allies and enemies, and he also learned how to handle small arms weapons. Up North, he learned the basics, but when he began his training at Camp Gordon in Johnston, Florida, Barrett and the rest of his regiment mastered “large scale assault maneuvers.”

By 1944, Barrett had departed from the United States, spending 22 days heading toward Oro Bay, New Guinea. It was there that he began true combat training, and in mid-September, he was part of the task force that retook Morotai Island into Allied hands.

Early in 1945, Barrett defended Manila from enemy forces and rebuilt roads and buildings damaged by artillery fire. And while he did go to Germany briefly, Barrett primarily fought in the Pacific theater.

“He told us about many times he was building roads and the Japanese would dive bomb, and he (would) just hop under his bulldozer to protect himself,” Gallogly said. “And then when they left, he got back up and kept going.”

Barrett achieved the title of corporal not just for his strength and intelligence, but also for his prowess, especially when it came to engineering and manning highway construction vehicles, skills no doubt picked up during his employment with the CCC.

When he returned to

Towns County after the military, Barrett faced a difficult landscape. Jobs were still scarce in Appalachia, especially in the lowermost section of the mountains, but there was always need for construction.

And so, Barrett made a living continuing what he had started years earlier in the CCC, albeit under far less stressful circumstances than in New Guinea and Japan.

Unfortunately, that required long hours away from his family, including his wife Norene and two young daughters, Mitzi and Karen. Often, he would return on Friday and leave on Sunday, always making sure to stay long enough for church.

At home, Barrett and Norene led very similar lives to their neighbors by being self-sufficient.

“Didn’t have too much,” Barrett said about the time when he started gardening, but he went on to talk about how he and his wife canned beans, cabbage, onions, corn and potatoes. They also raised beef cattle, hogs and chickens.

“Growing up, that’s how we lived,” daughter Mitzi Walker said. “We’d go help cut wood and put it on the back of the truck, and when the hay needed cutting, daddy would cut (it). We would rake it, and he’d have it baled, and we would help get the bales up. Karen and I did the fields.”

Years later, Karen Gallogly maintained a garden with her husband John, and when Vaughn called her up to ask for 12 ears of corn for his friend, he inspected what she brought to him only to send her back when he found worm bites. He reiterated that he wanted only the best 12 ears.

John Gallogly said he learned that day that “when (Barrett) gave something away, whether it was the shirt off his

back or the corn out of the field, he would always give the best. That’s all he could do.”

“If you needed his shirt, he’d take it off and give it to you,” John said. “That’s the kind of guy this guy is. (He’s) probably the most humble man I know, never taking credit for anything, but (he) just works his rear end off to support his family.

“And he did that, and God has blessed him with a long life. He doesn’t know why he’s still here, but I think there is a reason. Only God knows, but it may be influencing the people around him here, just saying, ‘Hey, life can be good. Life can be simple. Just live your life day to day.’”

Walker agrees, adding that “everybody said that the reason Mother and Daddy produced so much out of their garden was because the first mess (of the season), Dad and Mother gave away.”

Barrett smiled when he said he hadn’t changed “too awful much” in over a century of life, but he didn’t disagree when Walker said he had grown even stronger and wiser in his venerable old age.

And while Barrett hasn’t changed much, he has noticed how different Towns County is compared to when he was growing up. Barrett remembers large swaths of woods and acres of farmland, a place much less developed than the Hiawassee of today.

“When I went to work, I had to walk to my job,” Barrett recalled, noting that there weren’t nearly as many roads cutting through the area. “But I finally got to where I had a vehicle to ride in,” said Barrett, whose situation changed significantly after he became the proud owner of a Model T Ford.

“He’s just a quiet person. He never bothers anybody,” Walker said of Barrett’s life in the nursing home, and true to that statement, Barrett was largely quiet in his seat of honor at the front table where he sat in front of a massive cake frosted to resemble the American flag.

Of the party itself, Barrett agreed that it was “good,” and felt deeply honored by the show of respect put on by his fellow veterans. Family, friends and other nursing home residents attended, and Barrett was quick to offer cake to everyone and thank them for visiting.

# Fire Training...from Page 1A

whole gamut of fire operations training.

“It was a once-in-a-lifetime deal, especially in our world, when you’ve got something that people are wanting to get rid of like that, and our mutual aid partners can participate together – anybody will jump on that.”

All told, it was a massive exercise – the former dining hall alone was a 23,000 square foot facility – that not only imparted invaluable training that will benefit each county individually but also helped to strengthen ties and inter-agency experience for future multicounty responses.

The evening of the first burn, after all the smoke had cleared and north of 20,000 gallons of water had been sprayed to contain and direct the fire to protect nearby campus structures, Chief Copeland posted to Facebook a comprehensive “thank you” to everyone involved.

“These are the things that make being in public safety in such trying times so wonderful to have tri-county and out of state departments working together like none other,” Copeland said. “I’m humbled and honored.”

White County had originally planned to provide a 4,000-gallon tanker to aid in the efforts but had a last-minute issue that prevented its use, though the chief thanked the department for its willingness to assist.

Also, the Towns County Sheriff’s Office and Young Harris College Police Department worked traffic control; Towns County EMS had a med unit on standby; the Young Harris Water Department and Mayor Andrea Gibby offered the city’s services; college representatives were on hand; and Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw turned up to support the firefighters.

“I am so very proud of our Towns County Fire Department, and I couldn’t be



The Dining Hall demolition project at Young Harris College offered invaluable training opportunities for area firefighters last month. Photo/Submitted

more proud of the plans that were put in place on the training burn at the college,” Bradshaw said. “They executed everything to a T, and the training session went off absolutely perfect.

“I’m very thankful for the Towns County Fire & Rescue for all they do for our citizens each and every day, seven days a week. And I also want to thank the other counties for helping in the burn.”

In his more than 38 years of fighting fires, Chief Copeland has taken part in countless training exercises, but he said that times have changed since his early days such that opportunities like the one presented by Young Harris College – using a controlled environment to acquire hands-on experience in how fire moves through real-world burning structures – were fewer now.

That’s why getting such training for a younger group of firefighters, who have not gotten the chance to benefit from the same kinds of training the chief has over the years, has been so invaluable.

Of course, the chief

made sure to thank his Towns County Firefighters, saying that everyone worked amazingly well together in demonstrating the tight-knit nature of the regional community, and Copeland noted that he had “never seen such great camaraderie.”

“In a burn this size ... and close exposures, it takes a lot of players, and each performed flawlessly,” Copeland said. “I’m a blessed firefighter to be surrounded by such great men and women.”

There was some initial concern about the May 21 fire among community members, many of whom had not read the demolition press release distributed by the college earlier in the month, but the fire training and demo of the buildings, viewable from US 76, went off without a hitch.

The old Grace Rollins Dining Hall was renovated in 1989 by the family of college benefactor and former Board of Trustees Member Wayne Rollins, and the adjacent Duckworth Library was built in the 1920s by Charles Clegg, college president from 1950 to 1963.



# Scottish Festival...from Page 1A

sheep on the lower ballfield. The traditional shaggy Highland cows are also likely to return.

All vendors will carry specially themed Celtic items, whether shoppers are looking for clothing, jewelry, or other crafts. Visitors can also purchase historic and traditional items such as kilts, sporrans and Scottish weaponry, and those interested in historical reenactments can visit Clan Nan Con and the blacksmith near the vending area.

Of course, another popular aspect of festivals – the food – will be available as well. Popular Scottish cuisine like shortbread and the orange soda Irn Bru are on the menu, but for better or worse, there will be no haggis.

The Scottish Festival has something for everyone and is family friendly with a variety of activities for bairns – Scottish for “children” – to take part in. The “Passport to the Clans” activity requires children to visit each of the 38 clan tents to learn one fact and receive a corresponding stamp to their passport. The winners earn a prize after filling their passport.

Fink wants folks to keep in mind that, while there will be shuttles running from the uppermost parking lot to the front gates, visiting the Scottish Festival will be a very walking-intensive experience, especially with how widely spread across the park the activities are.

“Meeks Park has asphalt roads, but there’s a lot of up-and-down, so wheelchairs can be pushed easily, but you’ve



**It wouldn't be the Blairsville Scottish Festival without the Highland Games, with plenty of traditional Scottish sporting events prepared for the two-day festival.**

Photo/North Georgia News

got to be strong to do it,” Fink said. “If you want to go see the children’s activities and then wander over to the athletics and then over to the bands, there’s a fair amount of walking involved.”

Now in its 17th year, the event originally began as an educational venture meant to give North Georgians an idea of how and why their ancestors came to the Appalachian territory. It’s easy to see why – foggy mountain mornings and high altitudes were remi-

niscient to the climate of the Scottish Highlands.

“The whole purpose of the Scottish Festival was to reintroduce people to their heritage, and there (are) going to be people there (where) you can go to their booth if you want to (find out more about) your family name,” Fink said.

Visiting the genealogists’ tent may also be fruitful for folks who don’t have Scottish ancestry, as they can look up the symbolic crests of other families whose names fall outside of the Highlands. Each “scroll” usually comes with several paragraphs of information on the formation of the family name and a general area where the lineage began.

There’s a need for multi-talented volunteers who can work two or three hours during the festival, and interested parties can contact Wendy Beyer at vols.bsfig@gmail.com or visit blairsvillescottishfestival.com for more information.

Tickets are \$20 per person per day at the gate, cash only, and \$21 per person per day for online sales. Children 10 and under get in free, parking is also free, and guests can see a full list of vendors on the website.