

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Have a Great Christmas!

Please keep in mind and your hearts the "reason for the season"! And remember and honor those who have served America in any

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



of the uniforms of our military services PLUS those First Responders who make it possible for "Peace on Earth and good will towards mankind" For without those special folks so much would be lost, and lost forevermore. In regards to those amongst us who sacrificed much in Vietnam there's a historical tribute to those who sacrificed their Christmases away from home and families in Vietnam. Bear in mind many of those were NOT volunteers, but when ordered to report for duty, report they did!

Operation Linebacker II, North Vietnam, 1972. This air campaign as part of the biggest bombing mission in military history occurred during Christmas season 1972. President Richard Nixon immediately ordered these bombings to begin, December 18, after the Communist North Vietnamese attendees walked out of the "peace talks" and this is considered as THE action that ended U.S. involvement in that often mismanaged, awful war meant to set free the South Vietnamese people. This campaign was sometimes called the "11 Days of Christmas". Our forces consisted of B-52 Stratofortress bombers from Anderson AFB in Guam lasting 11 successive days, with the exception of Christmas Day. Our troops were given a 36 hour break. President Nixon ordered the Communists back to the bargaining table, after which they refused, thus triggering the intense bombings until 29 December. In 11 days, Linebacker II dropped 15,000 tons of bombs via 729 U.S. Air Force sorties involving about 12,000 airmen. Defense Department records show the raids destroyed or damaged 1,600 structures, 500 rail targets, 10 airfields and 80 percent of North Vietnam's electric-generating capacity. This action to cease hostile actions cost us fifteen B-52s, 35 fine men, and another 40 American POW's. Although our participation in that war would not end until two years afterwards, Linebacker II led directly to the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973.

So with this tiny reflection upon that which so many of our men and women have and continue to sacrifice their Christmases for please remember them, honor them, love them as they love each other and America. May God Bless all the men, women and their families who have served America this Christmas season, past, present and forevermore. Jesus was sent to us, just as we celebrate on Christmas. He Knew His future sacrifice to become our Risen Christ which also represents a true "soldier for all others" as he was later hung from the Cross, not unlike those men and women who also gave their all for others. Each of us can serve with our hearts, minds and souls, seeking to do better for America and each other. Have a very Merry Christmas! May God Bless America!

- Semper Paratus

Letters To The Editor

Warnock vs. Walker

Dear Editor,

In Towns County, 20% of us thought Sen. Warnock should represent the great state of Georgia in the United States Senate. I assume that he won his first election because of who he is. Being the senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church where Martin Luther King Jr. preached was a pretty good reflection of who the man is.

Perhaps he was supported in this election because of his established record in the Senate. He is ranked the 18th most bipartisan senator, following in the footsteps of Sen. Johnny Isakson. He has worked with Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz on different bills. He collaborated with Susan Collins on the \$35 insulin cost cap proposal.

There has been plenty written about who Mr. Walker is. I won't rehash it all here. The one policy that I am aware of that Mr. Walker stands for is banning abortions. Also, he is against doing anything about climate change because if we clean up our air it will drift over to China, and their bad air will come here. We have heard about his stance on vampires vs. werewolves and the story about the bull impregnating cows.

Eighty percent of us chose Mr. Walker to represent Georgia in the United States Senate.

Richard Freeman

Help Keep MECH Open

Dear Editor,

We all know the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Currently, the 18 campuses of Mountain Ed schools need some squeaky wheels. Due to HB 153, on June 30th of 2023, Mountain Ed will lose chartered school status. This will force it to be authorized by a local system, none of which have offered to partner to do so. This school system will be dissolved even though it has significantly changed the lives of its graduates and lowered the dropout rate in 18 counties, including yours.

Mountain Education serves students who have returned to school to give themselves a fighting chance in life. Many of these students do not have parents who will advocate for them. Can you imagine the uproar if football programs were cut? Or if the gifted funds were reallocated elsewhere? There would be no shortage of outcry. But for these kids, there are crickets.

If Mountain Ed is dissolved, how many of the 2,520 students served at 18 campuses will finish school? If they don't have the supports they need, the dropout rates go through the roof. The homeless rate goes up. The welfare rolls increase. The prison population increases. The taxpayer burden goes up. Mtn. Ed. is an opportunity for these students to open their own doors and not expect the taxpayers to support them for the rest of their lives.

There has to be a feasible way where the dollars are spent to rescue kids before they become adults who are dependent on the state to care for them. A way that will ease taxpayer burden by creating more taxpayers, instead of more tax users.

Mountain Ed gives students the steps and supports to make getting a job with a livable wage a reality. All Mountain Education students have mentors to help them navigate life itself. Please do not take hope away from our students, it's all many of them have left.

Let's all join together and get some grease. Call and write your representatives asking them to allow Mountain Education to remain a Georgia state chartered special school with a regional attendance zone and funding. <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Sincerely,
Michelle Gunnin,
Mountain Ed Educator



Why Christmas?

Each year we come into the Christmas season led, or followed by every expectation on that scale which ranges from hope to dread. The needle is seldom stationary. Some of us compare our lives to the brightly colored and sparkling images of merriment we see advertised and we find our own lives wanting. Some are filled with the spirit of fellowship and generosity and wonder why that spirit struggles to endure into the new year.

At our house this year, no one is waiting with growing anticipation to uncover the mysteries under the Christmas tree. The sound of children laughing, the smell of baking cookies, the voices of carolers, the joining of hands around the table, all are memories that grow dearer, and farther away, each year.

Whatever is left to us through choice and circumstance of the things most dear, time will eventually take from us anyhow. This year the seats around our family table are almost all empty. Yet today I am filled with gratitude, grateful to be alive, grateful for good health, for peace and comfort, for friends and family which remain, and countless other blessings. Which brings us to the question, "Why Christmas?" Why, indeed, Christianity?

Nothing I could say on the matter was not better said eighty years ago by C.S. Lewis, but he was not asked this very personal question quite recently, having said all he's going to say on the matter. A personal question deserves a personal reply, especially when failing to do so defeats the purpose of having any faith at all, or perhaps negates it entirely.

I celebrate Christmas in commemoration of the birth of Christ, and to borrow for just a moment from Lewis, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

"But why? It's not logical. It's not historically accurate. It's not scientific."

Christ reminded us that we are part of something greater than ourselves. We live on a world we did not create, and as we move through it in ignorance or in spite, we cause harm, and a debt is owed for that damage. This is a debt which, through our own actions we cannot pay, but it was paid for us. The principle of sacrifice as a parent sacrifices for a child, or one mate for another, is imminently logical, and as old as life on earth.

Historically the Scriptures have stubbornly resisted debunking for centuries as archaeology continues to verify names and places as well as events. And scientifically? For me it was science which pointed the way back to faith. I studied quantum physics for a time in college while probing for a direction my major might take. Quantum physics is the study of possibility, where thought and attention become essential components of reality itself, where thought is a thing as real as any number of fundamental particles which only seem to exist when you're looking at them.

It was actually Christmas that saved my life. Once I became ill and there were no answers to be found in any of the religions that instruct us how to become worthy of the hereafter. The only "god" that listened was the One spoken to by a church that believes salvation is a gift, and while their faith supported my own tiny spark, my body healed. Science said that I would be left with a number of scars and disabilities, but through faith, the illness simply left, and by the grace of God I am today as strong as a mule, though not quite as pretty.

In the continuing practice of that faith, I discovered that Christianity simply works. When you converse with the Creator, things just have a way of working out. Synchronicities start appearing in your life, and apparent coincidences that seem to defy logic. It has little to do with belief. Belief engages facts and logic and is subject to the laws of creation. Faith, on the other hand, is about trust, and the science of possibility.

Asked and answered, with a few travel notes from one man's journey. Everyone must make their own. I'll leave you this week with another gem from C. S. Lewis: "Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see."

And a Merry Christmas to you all!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

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Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net

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Holly

Holly trees are often used in Christmas decorations or as landscaping plants. This time of year, they provide some beautiful color with their green leaves and red berries. We actually have several different species of holly that are native to our area. Let's talk about the different types of holly in our area and how to take care of them.

UGA Extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Hollies are members of the genus Ilex. This genus has over 570 members from all over the world. Some species in the Ilex genus are evergreen, and some are deciduous. Two of the more common species of holly that we see here are American holly and Yaupon holly. Both of these species are evergreen. Typically, the holly that you see on postcards around Christmas time is the English holly. As inferred by its name, it is not native to this area. American holly has the prickly leaves that we associate with Christmas holly, while yaupon holly leaves are not prickly.

The American holly and Yaupon holly are dioecious trees, meaning that they have separate male and female plants. The red berries only grow on female plants, but they must have a male tree nearby to pollinate them. The flowers are very small and white. It is not advised to eat the berries as they are mildly toxic to humans and animals. Yaupon leaves can be used to make a caffeinated tea. The time of year that the leaves are harvested changes the flavor of the tea. They tend to do well in our area as they can grow in full sun to part shade, and like a soil that is acidic. You can purchase fertilizers made specifically for hollies.

The main difference between a fertilizer for hollies and other fertilizers is that the holly fertilizer will turn the soil slightly acidic over time. You can use holly fertilizer on other acid loving plants like blueberries, rhododendrons, and azaleas. There are many varieties of American and Yaupon holly that you can purchase and plant in your yard. Some varieties of American holly are able to self-pollinate and produce berries without a male present. There are also some varieties that have yellow berries instead of the typical red.

There are not too many insect pests that affect hollies. Leaf miners, spider mites, scale can have an impact, but usually horticultural oil will treat them. If they are planted in soils that remain wet for too long hollies can have issues with root rot. If root rot takes hold the tree will need to be removed. Sapsuckers are birds that will drill holes in trees to consume the sap. They do seem to like hollies. If you see lots of holes in the bark along a horizontal line that is likely sapsucker damage.

Evergreen hollies will drop leaves in the spring and the fall. They shouldn't drop more than a third of the leaves. If they drop too many leaves, that is a sign that the tree could be under stress from disease, insects, or soil pH that is too high.

If you have questions about holly trees contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters To The Editor

Keeping Christianity In Christmas

Dear Editor,

A lot of people worry today how to keep Christ in Christmas, and rightfully so, as our culture teeters on becoming a secular, spiritual wasteland.

One simple way to keep Christ in Christmas is with your choice of Christmas decorations for your yard and home of all things. Think about it, the more monsters dressed in Santa Suits you have or the more light-up deer or polar bears with candy canes you put out -- while not also putting out traditional scenes of shepherds, wise men, angels, and of course baby Jesus Himself -- the more people, especially little people who are children now, will associate those things with Christmas instead of Christ with Christmas.

Look around; it's what's happening. So few Christmas scenes with Christ in them; but you can change that simply by what decorations you choose. It may sound minor, but the repercussions may be major. So, please keep Christ in Christmas, including in your decorations, lest we forget the Reason for the Season.

Will Lance

What's Heaven Like

Dear Editor,

Like something out of a Star Wars movie. We will gaze upon things unimaginable to the naked eye. Our jaws will drop wide open to the beauty that God has designed for His children. Imagine if you can a place of total peace and harmony. A place where sin, sorrow, heartache, suffering and abortions cease to be. No more dying. Sin will never be on anyone's lips for eternity. Where the wicked cannot enter and no tempter to ensnare our feet. Heaven is a land of perfect holiness, and therefore of complete security. In heaven there will be no more weeping of tears, only joy will fill our eyes with gladness by the Masters' loving embrace. Oh, how wonderful it will be to gaze on that blessed face forever. And the good news is we will be co-heirs with Jesus, meaning we will have an inheritance incorruptible to enjoy for eternity. What is His will be ours as well, because we chose the shed blood of Jesus Christ that sets us free, free indeed.

Heaven will be inhabited only by those who have chosen the narrow path of righteousness and have accepted Christ into their heart and soul. Did you know that Jesus calls us saints of the Most High God? We are sons and daughters united as one in the family of God. God has said that our names are graven on His hand, and He whispers in our ear this promise: Fear not, for I am with you always. Look upon Him, the great Guarantee of the covenant, as faithful and therefore bound and committed to present you, in your weakness, with all the chosen race, before the throne of God and come and drink the cup of salvation and taste the fruits of paradise. We can have a foretaste of the enjoyments that ravish the souls of other saints in heaven if you believe with unwavering faith that "He who calls you is faithful, He will surely do it (1. Thessalonians 5:24). Why wouldn't anyone want to go to heaven with all of God's promises that are yours to claim, if you only believe upon the Name of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the whole world.

Frank F. Combs

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