

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Guest Editorial

FACEBOOK VS. NEWSPAPERS

Facebook posts may get you 'likes' today, but newspapers archive events forever

By Dan Pool, Pickens County Progress, Jasper

A caller to our office recently, made the statement, "the first thing EVERYONE does is get up and look at Facebook."

While Facebook may seem all-consuming, that statement is ridiculously far from true. In fact, according to the Pew Research group earlier this year, 69 percent of Americans had a Facebook account. Their survey results, available online, noted that number was barely up from the 68 percent in 2018 and the percent of Facebook accounts hadn't increased any noticeable amount since 2016. Bear in mind, this 69 percent includes both the serious, several-times-a-day user and the guy who hasn't check his account in weeks.

The ability to post whatever you want, from political rants to goofy pet photos, all for free is clearly part of modern culture and I'll not be the old curmudgeon print editor who argues otherwise.

There is one place, though, I am consistently amazed people don't use traditional print newspapers more often and that is with the really important, substantial events of lives -- the births and weddings. We still get plenty of obituaries, but the tradition of putting birth and wedding announcements in the paper has all but vanished.

A journalism professor of mine at the University of Georgia would mention that most people make the paper three times: When you are born, when you get married and when you die.

Now many people will make the paper only once, when they die, at all, as some families don't publish obituaries.

I understand that Facebook offers a great spot to put up 47 baby photos welcoming a new child and you have the immediate gratification of watching the "likes" roll in.

Where many people are missing the boat is with the permanent record of something printed in a weekly newspaper. Newspapers have for well over a century maintained a public record that later generations can rely on as a trusted, accurate source of the people in the community. When was this person born? Who was listed as grandparents? Did the wedding announcement from 50

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Passing of Time

The older you are, the more your memories invade your thoughts during the holidays. You recall family and pleasant moments. The finality of the passing of time brings a sigh. How fleeting is this life!

Seasonal songs set the context for reflections about time. That glorious song of old came upon the midnight clear, yet here we are in our olden days, happy golden days of yore. Should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind? Not if all is calm, all is bright when you think of them. You see what I mean.

God created you to think about time, and the ability to remember is meant to be a gift. It is indeed a gift when you learn from the past, and when you retreat to pleasant moments that make the present sweeter. You should find it no surprise that God has spoken into that space where we think about time. One concise collection of such inspiration is Psalm 90. Let me share these with you.

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations, before the mountains were born" (v.1,2). God has always offered a place of rest and refuge. You work and wander in this life, but Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. 11:28). When guilt about the past or worry about the future exhaust you, you can find rest.

"You turn man back into dust. For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by" (v.3,4). Your time in the flesh is limited like grass when "toward evening it fades and withers away" (v.6). This recalls one of life's ultimate questions, "Why am I here?" The most satisfying answer you will ever find is rooted in this: "Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is" (Col. 3:1).

"Soon (life) is gone and we fly away. So teach us to number our days that we may present to You a heart of wisdom" (v.10,12). The farmer counts the days from planting until his crop presents its harvest and the chaff blows away. Jesus likened your life to a seed. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). Paul elaborated, "I no longer live but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Your life yields a wise harvest when Christ lives in you.



All Things New
Wayne Fowler

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Commissioner's Questions

Q. I was unable to attend the Public Hearing regarding the 2020 Budget. What information was given at this Public Hearing?

A. This Public Hearing consisted of providing the public with information and with an opportunity to ask questions and make comments regarding the 2020 Budget for Union County Government. The proposed 2020 Budget was published in the paper, and all attendees at the Public Hearing were provided a copy as well. The proposed budget will be set at \$19,462,648, which is an increase from the 2019 Budget which was set at \$17,099,955. Fortunately, revenues also increased to prevent a property tax increase.

Q. Why did our budget increase during these good economic times?

A. Many people may not think about it, but in extremely good economic times as we are having right now, the demand for services and products means that most items are increasing in cost (inflation) from steel, asphalt and equipment, to wages because of the demand for products and employees

Q. What are some main costs contributing to the increase in the budget from 2019 to 2020?

A. The largest impacts are for employee benefits including medical insurance costs, county property and liability insurance, as well as salary increases for the Sheriff's Dept and Jail. The past four years have seen our employee medical insurance increase an average of \$450,000 each year.

Asphalt prices have gone up from \$71.50 per ton to \$82.50 per ton, increasing our cost \$100,000 next year. All court related costs, such as the Public Defender's Office, Juvenile Court, and the District Attorney's Office, are all increasing each year.

Q. Will the 2020 elections have an economic impact on the county?

A. Definitely but until we receive all the required election details from the state, it is hard to guess at a number. The state is requiring all counties to have new voting equipment and will require additional personnel and facility upgrades for the 2020 elections. While the state is paying for most of the equipment

Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris



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A Year in Review

It is a new year. It seems that 2019 flew by in a flash. For Union County Fire Department and Emergency Management, the year 2019 was one of our busiest. We would like to reflect on the many achievements and happenings of the department over the last year. This week, we will talk about training.

Training has always been a priority of the department and in 2019 the department outdid itself. Firefighters, career and volunteer, completed over 10,000 hours of training during the year. That averages over 100 hours for each firefighter. January started with a Support Firefighter class. This class is the entry level class for the department and consists of 60 hours of training. We also completed a second support firefighter class in November adding several new members.

During some heavy rains in February, the Union County Swiftwater Rescue team used the rising water as a training opportunity. Swimmers

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer



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Letters to the Editor

I Grow Weary

I really tire of some bemoaning our Electoral College system and spouting words like "popular vote" and "our democracy requires fair vote counts for all."

While this all sounds good, it is flawed, we are not the United PEOPLE of America, we are the United STATES of America, and each state has a popular vote and therefore a say in who becomes our president via the Electoral College. Also, we are not a Democracy but a Representative Republic, and each STATE has voice in our government through senators and Congress. It's a beautiful system, because if you boil it down, pure democracy is just mob rule.

W. Keith Hunter

A Christmas Prayer

Jesus came to earth 2000 years ago, and what have we learned since then? Our country and the whole world are still caught up in self centeredness. When we can only think of what is good for ourselves and our country, it inevitably leads to trampling on the needs of others in order to achieve power, control and material riches. Jesus taught us to care for the needy and poor and to love one another and even to love our enemies, and to pray for those who persecute us. If we are ever to achieve peace on earth and goodwill to men, and if we are to live an authentic Christian life, we have to return to those teachings. Is it possible? If so, we will have to question our every action and ask if it is in line with the teachings of Jesus. It will take a change of heart. We

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Message to Climate Alarmists as We Begin 2020

As we begin 2020, let's be mindful of some of the things we are thankful for, shall we?

- 1) Vegetation growth has increased across the earth thanks to carbon dioxide.
- 2) Americans have rejected the radical and lousy Green New Deal.
- 3) Fracking has revolutionized American oil production, leading the U.S. to become a net exporter of oil for the first time in decades.
- 4) Without petroleum, we wouldn't have: aspirin, bicycle tires, cellphones, chewing gum, computers, toothpaste, oh, and solar panels. And;
- 5) If the world really is warming, that may be something to be thankful for - cold weather kills 20 times more people than hot weather.

Tim Groza

Drug Free Mountain Life

Resources in The Community

Union County has several resources available for drug prevention, drug treatment and support during times of crisis.

These services are often free and easy to access but often people do not know that they are available.

Drug Free Mountain Life has an arrangement with Alpha Drug Testing and New Hope Counseling of Blairsville to provide free drug screens for teens.

If you suspect your adolescent or teen of drug use, these agencies will provide a drug screen and documented results.

All records are confidential, and information cannot be shared unless a release of information is provided by the parent or guardian.

Contact Alpha Drug Testing, (866) 588-7878 or New Hope Counseling of Blairsville, (706) 745-4066 for more information about these services.

Biannually, Drug Free Mountain Life and Blairsville City Police sponsor Drug Take Back Day.

The purpose of this event is to provide the public with an opportunity to safely dispose of expired or unused prescriptions in the home.

Participants dispose of their prescriptions in a secure container and they are later destroyed.

Prescription lock boxes are given to each person that brings in a prescription. These events are advertised in the paper and on social media and are held at convenient locations.

If you have prescriptions in your home that are expired or unused and do not want to wait for Drug Take Back Day, the Union County Sheriff's office has a secure receptacle for the disposal of prescription medications.

This is a safe and responsible choice that eliminates the risk of others abusing the medication or someone taking it by mistake.

If you or someone you know is in crisis and in need of support services, the Georgia Crisis and Access Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including holidays.

This service provides treatment and support for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities and addictive diseases.

All calls are confidential, and every call is answered by a mental health professional.

If you or someone you know is in crisis call 1-800-715-4225.

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

Real Char'acters

As a young boy, I heard my grandfather would use strange words that were spoken by people in England during Chaucer's time. The Appalachian Mountains were isolated from the rest of the world during my grandfather's childhood. These mountains were not opened up to the rest of the world until my lifetime.

Many of the words that were used by early settlers to America were still in use until 1970's in rural Appalachia.

These words included "holped," "directly," and a phrase used by my grandfather was "a real char'acter."

When papa said, "My Papa John was a real char'acter," he meant his grandfather was a person who stood out because of their nature and character. Sometimes Papa would use the phrase to indicate a person was full of the devilment like his grandfather, or he might use the phrase to mean a person's intelligence and character should be emulated.

For example, John Cummings was a blacksmith. He was big, brawny, strong, loved to drink, loved to fight and loved the ladies. One time he went to a wedding and enjoyed a little too much of the apple brandy before the wedding even began. As a result, he walked to the front of the church, stood in the pulpit, stripped off his clothing and offered to fight any man in the building. When there were no takers, he made everyone leave the wedding and refused to let the services continue. Later in life, John left his first wife and moved to Missouri. There, he raised another bunch of Cummings kids.

Later in life, my Papa and one of his cousins went to visit their Grandfather in Missouri one summer. They were helping him in the Blacksmith Shop when John asked the cousin to hand him a hammer. The boy sassed his grandfather and told him to get the hammer himself. The boy knew he was in trouble, so he turned to run. The old man picked up the 5-pound hammer and threw it at the boy, barely missing his ear, and said, "My boys never sassed me, and neither are my Grandsons." John Cummings was a "real char'acter."

He had five sons, all of whom became farmers. Lon was my great grandfather, and he owned a large farm on the road between Phil Campbell and Trapptown. One day, the Alabama Department of Highways came to Lon's house wanting a right of way on his property so a road could be built in front of his house. He was about 68 years old at this time and agreed to give a right of way for the road if the construction of the highway would not create a road bank

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Around The Farm Mickey Cummings



Apple Tree Pruning

Deep winter is prime apple tree pruning time. Pruning apple trees is important early in the tree's life so that it gets started off right. Later on, if you properly prune the tree each year the tree will be more productive, more disease resistant, and have a longer life. Keeping all these things in mind, let's talk about apple tree pruning today.

The general advice that I give people when it comes to pruning apple trees is to prune as much as you feel comfortable, then go back and prune a bit more. Most of the time people are afraid of damaging the tree if they cut too far back. But if trees are pruned at the right time of year and the right branches are cut off, it will be better for the long term health of the tree.

If you have a tree that has not been pruned regularly, and you're trying to get it back into shape you'll want to start out by pruning out and dead or diseased branches. Second you'll want to cut out any crossing branches. Crossing branches create open wounds that can get easily infected. After you've pruned out dead, diseased, and crossing branches you want to try and open up the canopy. An open canopy will allow air to flow through. That's going to reduce the humidity, and therefore reduce the likelihood of disease occurring. The saying is that you want the canopy to be so open that a bird could fly through it without hitting any branches. A tree that has too many branches will not be as productive. An apple tree is only able effectively produce a certain amount of fruit. Adding fertilizer can boost the productivity. Therefore, pruning might affect the number of fruit you tree produces, but you'll have better quality and they'll be more likely to make it all the way to maturity.

Trees that have been properly pruned their whole lives will have more a Christmas tree shape than a teardrop shape. If you have a newly planted tree you'll need to prune it as well. If you have planted an unbranched whip you'll need to cut it back to 24 to 30 inches above the ground. This is going to encourage the new tree to branch out. If you don't prune an unbranched whip, you'll probably end up having a 20 foot tall tree that doesn't have any branches on it.

Sometimes people will plant a seed from an apple core that they've eaten. This can be a fun experiment for kids to see an apple tree grow. An issue that you may run into with this is that there is no telling what kind of apple tree will come up. If you plant a seed from your favorite apple, that fruit could have been pollinated by a different variety, leaving you with an unknown cross. Another issue is that nowadays most trees

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe



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