

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Diamond Memories

I ran into a man the other day that I haven't seen since the end of the 1977 Union County Panthers baseball season. His hair now sports silver highlights, but the face is the same. The chance meeting brought back a flood of memories. All are good ones.

Tommy Sosebee taught me more about baseball than I thought I already knew. He left here to coach high school football in other venues.

He taught me the ins and outs, and provided me with a rare opportunity that a lot of high school kids don't get the chance to achieve.

I was probably the worst baseball player in Union County High School history. Well, maybe I'm being to hard on myself. Then again, nah, I was pretty bad.

The problem was I didn't start playing organized baseball until my junior year in high school. I remember my first day of practice. It was raining outside, we were practicing in The Pit (former UCHS Gym). I was working on fielding drills with my teammate Larry Poteete.

Coach Sosebee was looking over the team he would field in 1977. He shouted at me, "hey Duncan, have you ever played organized baseball before?"

"No coach, this is my first practice," I proudly quipped. "Wow, I can tell," he said with a smile on his face.

I was even more pitiful on the field when it was dry. Sometimes I made a little contact in batting practice, sometimes I didn't. Coach Sosebee counted the pitches thrown to me. He had to stop the batting practice pitcher when I reached my maximum number of pitches to swing at.

I say "swing at" because, for the most part, that's what I did, rarely making contact.

The one thing that Coach Sosebee did recognize about me, I knew the game of baseball. I just didn't know how to play it.

I could quote batting averages, almost every statistic and Major League player's number and position by heart. I knew every World Series result from beginning to end.

Coach Sosebee allowed me to strategically organize the lineup card. I knew my teammates inside and out. I made out a lot of lineups for Coach, he'd make changes to suit him afterward.

For the most part, my lineups stayed intact, which made me pretty proud.

Coach didn't have an assistant, therefore, I became his first base coach. I knew all the game signs by heart, I also made sure base runners didn't get too far off the first base bag.

I learned how to tell when a pitcher was coming to the bag with a pickoff attempt. I was able to make sure our runners got back in time.

I also made a blunder or two. I remember one game against Forsyth County when the ball got away from the first baseman. Rather than move out of the way, I got the ball for him.

"Duncan, don't help them out any, they're good enough without your help," Coach said.

Then there was the 17th game of the baseball season. Coach Sosebee asked me to lead the team in the Lord's Prayer prior to playing a Region game against Banks County.

I froze, I couldn't remember the words to one of the most repeated prayers in the history of Mankind.

I managed to get, "our most gracious Heavenly Father" out of my mouth. Coach looked puzzled and quickly reminded me, that wasn't the Lord's Prayer.

"The Lord's Prayer Duncan, the Lord's Prayer," he said.

With the help of my teammates, we got the words flowing. We won the game.

Afterward, I felt two inches tall. Those memories are still some of my fondest. Welcome home Coach. Union County missed you.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Not What They Used To Be

I feel like the fellow who said, "Things are not what they used to be - and one of them is me." When I was a kid things were much slower. It took Christmas forever to come. School was much longer then. Summer took years to arrive. Birthdays were really slow, especially my 16th birthday (must have taken 20 years to get there). I thought I would never get out of high school.

But something has happened. Back then I tried to speed things up. Now I am trying to slow things down. Not many days hence, I will have another birthday. I declare I must be having at least two birthdays a year. Time is certainly not what it used to be.

Time seems to have accelerated and I have slowed down. Sometimes I feel like calling time out until I can catch up. When you get over 60 people say you are over the hill. I personally don't remember getting to the top. I feel like I am still climbing. If I were going down the other side I don't believe it would take so much energy.

Not only has time changed, but also my looks have changed. I look in the mirror and see an entirely different person. Gone are the days of jet-black hair. It has become all silvery and white.

I am looking more like my driver's license picture everyday. You take a shower and notice that you are wrinkled, saggy, and lumpy and that's just your left leg. You get out of the shower and try to get the wrinkles out of your socks and discover you haven't put them on yet. You then think that you have finally gotten your head together, but your body is falling apart.

As time marches on there is a gain and loss factor. I have discovered that I have gained weight, mostly around the waist. I still wear the same size pants that I have for the past several years - I just wear them lower.

I thank God that so far my losses have been minimal. I have lost some hair, some hearing, some eyesight and a little memory. I believe I have gained some wisdom. I appreciate every day that I live. It is God's gift. I am thankful for children so beautiful and innocent. I am grateful for senior adults and their

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



See Parris, page 5A

Q & A for April 24, 2013

Q. What is going on out at Nottely Dam? We noticed that the lanes have been closed at times.

A. We were notified by TVA that beginning April 1 and continuing for several weeks motorists can expect lane closures on the road as the Tennessee Valley Authority conducts a geotechnical evaluation of the earth-and-rock structure as part of a "health check" update of all 49 dams in the TVA system.

Q. Why are they doing a "health check?" Is something wrong with the dam?

A. TVA's dams are safe, and the health check is part of a continuous improvement campaign to make sure TVA's dams meet today's stringent industry safety standards. As part of the Nottely health check, TVA anticipates that core drilling from the roadway on the crest of the dam, Georgia 325/Nottely Dam Road, will require lane closures in sections on the dam and up to a mile west of the main dam.

Q. How long will this work be taking place?

A. The approximate duration of the closure will be two months starting on or about April 1. We were told that drivers can expect: Multiple segments of the West bound lane will be closed for the duration of the project Temporary traffic signals will be in place on both ends of the closure zone to allow traffic to move through the section (one direction at a time). A reduced speed limit of 25 miles per hour will be enforced within the closure zone. The limits of the closure zone will be shifted at times through the duration of the project. Motorists need to be watchful for revised closure locations. In certain cases, traffic will be stopped briefly in both directions to allow construction vehicles to maneuver within the work zone. In certain cases, a flagman may replace the temporary signals and manual traffic control may be utilized.

Q. How old is the Nottely Dam?

A. The dam was completed in 1942, is 197 feet high and stretches 3,915 feet across the tributary Nottely River, providing flood storage and hydroelectric generation to TVA.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Q. What can you tell us about the TVA?

A. The Tennessee Valley Authority is a

See Paris, page 5A

North Georgia Farm Trail

Have you ever heard the term agritourism? Agritourism is a beautiful blend of Georgia's top two revenue generating industries - agriculture and tourism. For some, this evokes thoughts of experiencing a day like a true farmer by milking cows, tending animals, or picking fresh fruit. Others imagine touring wineries, taking a hayride on a working farm, or navigating a challenging corn maze. No matter what your perception, combining these two industries offers a unique experience to travelers and one that is quickly gaining popularity. With the recent emphasis on agritourism throughout the State and the fact that our mountain region naturally offers these types of experiences, I present to you the North Georgia Farm Trail.

The Chambers of Commerce in Gilmer, Fannin, Union, and Towns counties are collectively working on focusing increased attention on tourism along Georgia Highway 515. Because this is an easy and direct drive from Atlanta, we feel there is a great opportunity for

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Candy Williams



See Williams, page 5A

Spring Training or Off Broadway

When I lived in South Florida, I would occasionally attend a few pre-season National Baseball League games. Spring Training gives a team an opportunity to get the feel of working together, honing their strengths and focusing on the weaknesses, overcoming them with strategic rosters. It also gets the fans geared up, showing them the potential for a winning season. It's time used by the "back office" to brand the season and make it as irresistible to the fan base as possible, to assure butts in those stadium seats.

Off-Broadway plays a similar role. Shows which are perceived as not yet ready for "prime time" or whose investors feel they want to build an audience before they invest in a Broadway run, usually get their start in a more intimate theater, out of the glare of the big spotlights. Show's like "The Fantastik's", the longest running musical in history, spent its first 42 years off-Broadway. Mega hit's like "A Chorus Line" and "Rent" tested their chops on an off Broadway stage long before playing to the big seats.

This year, the Union County Farmers Market is getting geared up for our big stage, come June 8th. Or if you like sports analogies better, this past Thursday night was the first day of Spring Training. The Ramp Festival literally blew in. That steady breeze spread the savory aroma of cooked ramps, bratwurst and dogs on the grill and the laughter and joy of those attending sweeping through the air surrounding the market.

I got the biggest kick out of watching people try Ramps for the first time. This wild plant is like a blend of garlic, onion and leeks with the green tops being as delectable as the bulbous base. Thursday, thanks to a plethora of volunteers, the ramps were served over sausages and burgers, fried up with potatoes, pickled, in corn bread, and even in a squash casserole.

My favorite dish of the evening was

Farmers Market Moment

JorAnne Leone



See Leone, page 5A



Thankful

Dear Editor

We would like to thank the two people who donated \$100 each toward Curtis' trip and medical treatment in Omaha. We also thank the ones who came by our yard sale. The yard sale will last every sunny Saturday through the month of May.

The family is excited about Curtis' trip. It is necessary for him to return to his surgeon in Omaha and start the next stage of his reconstruction. Again thank you for your support and generous prayers. Throughout the many years of treatment and surgeries we would never have made it without God's intercession. We will have a 'Cook out' soon.

Curtis' Family

Know your rights

Dear Editor:

Obama and his Washington Progressives are not anti-gun. Don't entertain that thought for one second. They love guns. They all have bodyguards with automatic weaponry; they all send their kids to fancy private schools with fully-armed guards. What they are against is YOU having guns to protect yourself. That is what they seek to control, to ban and to eradicate. Not guns, but the ability of the citizenry for self-defense from tyrants. Once you are disarmed, you become easy prey. Our Founding Fathers knew this, and did everything they could to warn future generations from becoming disarmed.

Our Founding Fathers said this about defending ourselves from tyrants:

"Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are ruined. The great object is that every man be armed. Everyone who is able may have a gun." - **Patrick Henry**

"Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed, as they are in almost every kingdom in Europe. The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword, because the whole of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any band of regular troops." - **Noah Webster**

"Arms in the hands of the citizens may be used at individual discretion for the defense of the country, the overthrow of tyranny or private self-defense." - **John Adams**

"The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government." **Thomas Jefferson**

What you allow to happen here in 2013 will dictate the course of how America will go hereafter. Freedom and liberty are not guaranteed, it is not a given. It was won by blood,

See Paolillo, page 5A

Wrastling

Get the picture. It was a hot July day in 1970. All of us cousins had finished working in the chicken house and garden and we were on our way to Baker's Rock swimming hole. Robin was the eldest cousin and she was left in charge by our Grandmother Adams. Each day we made our way to Baker's Rock. First, we would make the swimming hole deeper by adding another layer of rock to the dam across the creek. Then we would jump off Baker's Rock and swim in the creek. Today was no different and soon Robin was barking out orders to all of her younger cousins.

I was next in line to Robin and behind me was Dewayne. He was 2-3 years younger than Robin. Dewayne didn't like the idea of taking orders from a girl. We were nearly finished with the task of piling up rocks and Robin told Dewayne to get a couple more rocks for the dam. Dewayne looked at her and said, "I don't have to listen to you. You are a girl and I am a man and men don't take orders from women". All work stopped at that point and all of us looked at Robin to see what she would do next. She calmly walked to Dewayne and tried to negotiate. Dewayne just stood his ground.

I am sure Dewayne thought he could bluff Robin and she would back down. They were standing nose to nose when Dewayne pushed her. That was a mistake. She grabbed Dewayne and placed him in a head lock that would make Tojo Yamamoto smile. She looked just like a Pro Wrestler. By this time they were standing in knee deep water. She told Dewayne to say uncle. Dewayne screamed out "NEVER." At that point Robin sat down in the water and pushed his head under the water. I began to worry when I saw bubbles coming from the water. Robin yanked up Dewayne's head and said, "Say Uncle." Dewayne said, "No." This happened four times until Dewayne popped out of the water and screamed "UNCLE." He sat there for a moment to catch his breath. Soon he got up and walked over to our dam and began piling rocks. The only difference in this fight and a Saturday evening wrestling match was that we didn't need tickets. We had the best seats in the house on top of Baker's Rock.

My grandmother never believed that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. I remember watching that event live and at school. Shortly afterward I was visiting Granny and began to talk about astronaut, Neil Armstrong. I explained that he might just be the most important man on earth. Granny patted my head and explained that Neil Armstrong never walked on the moon. She said, "Those people were actually in Arizona and they were walking around in the desert at night. Men will never walk around on the moon."

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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Letters to the Editor ...

Madison's 2nd Amendment

Dear Editor:

James Madison, a member of the Democrat Republican Party, helped frame the Bill of Rights. He was considered to be a strict constructionist, opposed to the free interpretation of the Constitution - i.e., it says what it means and means what it says.

So, when he included in the Bill of Rights that badly-constructed and confusing Second Amendment ("A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed"), we have to assume that Madison meant that his words be interpreted precisely as he wrote them.

Logically, then, that would mean that he saw the only reason for any American to "keep and bear arms" would be as part of a militia. All other purposes would be moot, in that we have a constitutionally-armed military and the National guard for protection.

There is an interesting perspective to the term "militia," as used by Madison, documented in "The Hidden History of the Second Amendment," made part of the 1998 edition of the UC Davis Law Review, which reveals that at the time of the construction of the Second Amendment by James Madison, state militias were used by white slave owners to seek out runaway slaves and to intimidate others - Madison, himself, being a slave owner. It is by no mistake, too, that we have in this country armed hate groups who refer to themselves as "militias."

The confusion over the meaning and/or intent of the Second Amendment - indeed, all of the Constitution itself - calls for a complete re-write of the whole document, to be written in words all Americans can understand and without the need to defer to the Supreme Court on issues of constitutionality. Above all, a new version of the Constitution should reflect modern mores; we live in the present, not the past. The Founders of this nation and the framers of the Constitution were not possessed of a crystal ball to see into the future; their vision, while admirable for their time, was necessarily limited; and their words were not etched in stone.

Sincerely,
Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

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Kenneth West
Owner / Publisher

Charles Duncan
Editor

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer



Website: www.nganews.com
E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com
Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514