

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A Commissioner who cares

When you send a letter to Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, you can expect a prompt response. Carol Hancock, of Suches, was upset that during a bicycle event in her hometown, the freshly paved Highway 180 was spray-painted by the event personnel with instructions. It offended her, as it offended most folks in Suches. She sent a letter to the editor, with a photo of the spraypainted highway. She also sent a letter to Commissioner Lamar Paris. "I want to thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter and look forward in hearing from you as how this issue will be handled."

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Commissioner Paris, who has no say in what state routes are used for, promptly forwarded the letter to the Georgia Department of Transportation, and responded to Hancock detailing what he had done.

I know of no other public official anywhere in Georgia that spends so much time and effort in corresponding with the public as Commissioner Paris. It's because he cares about Union County and the reason he cares, this is his hometown.

The response from GDOT: "Thank you (Ms. Hancock) for sending your e-mail to Commissioner Paris. He and I have a long standing relationship and I take very serious the issues he sends me. I had our Area Engineer that covers Union County take a look at the corridor. He did note the spray paint, but feels that it will fade/wear off fairly quickly. Additionally, I forwarded your e-mail to our District Traffic Engineer and asked that he take this information into consideration when the race organizers contact us for next year's race. We certainly don't appreciate it when the roadways are damaged and will do everything we can to make sure it doesn't happen again. Thanks for bringing this to our attention, Brent E. Cook, District Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation."

Ms. Hancock, you can rest assured that your commissioner works hard to make sure his county and its residents are taken care of countywide.

Commissioner Paris, thank you for all you do for our hometown and the people that call it home.

A Time to Weep

Growing up here in the mountains most of us were told or we heard some of our friends told, "Nobody loves a cry baby." When you stubbed a toe, had to have a tooth pulled or a large briar removed from your hand or foot, the only anesthesia was verbal. Mostly, it came in the form of this phrase: "Grit your teeth, son." Later, I found out why you were told to do this. You see, it is impossible for you to scream with your teeth welded shut. I confess that I always had trouble trying to grit my teeth when my dad was fixing to jerk out a loose tooth with a string. While it is commendable to be strong, "to grin and bear it," sometimes it may be more courageous to cry.

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Occasionally, I encounter an individual who is an emotional wreck. They have gone through some traumatic tragedy and some well-meaning person has said, "Oh, be brave, don't cry." These people have no understanding of the therapy of timely tears. There is a time to weep and a time to mourn said the preacher of Ecclesiastes 3:4. Jesus, the most manly man that has ever lived was not ashamed to cry. He mourned over the city of Jerusalem. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. Luke records that one day a woman came to Jesus and anointed him not only with expensive ointment, but anointed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Not once did Jesus ever instruct her not to cry (Luke 7:37ff). The Psalmist said that God knew his restlessness, his wonderings and tossings. He said that God had put his tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). God knows our hurts, our losses, our loneliness, the heartbreaks and the heartaches of life. He hears our cries and takes note of our tears. Jeremiah is sometimes referred to as the weeping prophet. He wanted to weep day and night for his wayward people (Jer.9:1). Paul in his letter to the Corinthians said, "I wrote unto you with many tears..." (II Cor. 2:4).

The great need for many Christians in America is to weep over their own sins in deep repentance, and to weep for lost humanity. We certainly need to weep with those who weep. The Psalmist said, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5). Someday we will die to cry no more. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes..." (Rev. 21:4). There is a time to

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Questions and Answers

SPLOST Questions- Part II

Q. What was the original revenue estimate for SPLOST III (April of 2009 through March of 2015)?

A. The original estimate was for the county to collect \$31.5 million dollars. However, in early SPLOST because of the way the law was written, it was best for the counties to use high estimates, because they would be required to cease accepting revenue should the estimated revenue be received before the end of the SPLOST. So it was to our benefit to be sure that we covered all potential project cost and revenue estimates as best we could.

Q. How much revenue did we actually collect during the SPLOST III?

A. There are still seven months of revenue yet to be collected. At this point in time, we have collected \$18,671,940, and estimate that when we receive our last check in April 2015, the total amount collected will be just over \$20 million dollars.

Q. Does this decrease in SPLOST revenue impact the projects?

A. Absolutely. While it would have been nice to have collected an additional \$10 million dollars, we are blessed that the collections have been as good as they have. Especially this year, where our sales tax numbers have continued to improve and we estimate that the 2014 collections will exceed the 2013 collections by approximately 4%.

Q. What revenue number have we used as the estimate for the new SPLOST IV collections (April 2014 thru May 2020)?

A. We have conservatively estimated the collections to be \$19,000,000 for the next six years.

Q. Does the SPLOST law determine every single project that can be completed?

A. Certainly not. It would be pretty ridiculous if the law did require this knowing all the fluctuations possible in sales tax revenue. Unless it is a Tier One project, most projects are general in nature allowing counties the ability to make some adjustments based on revenue.

Q. What does the law require regarding funding of projects?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor ...

Due diligence required

Dear Editor,

I'd like to comment on Ms. Shofner's letter of Oct 1. But first I'd like to give a little of my background so she can understand where my thoughts come from. First, I was born into a deep rooted Democratic family residing in the long time Democratic State of Virginia. In that time and place Republican was a dirty word, never to be spoken. In fact my first presidential vote was for John Kennedy. And as I grew a little older and my values changed ever so slightly, I realized my values were more in line with the Republican values. So the first republican I voted for was Ronald Regan. However, although I agreed with some of his policies, there were a couple, such as his stance against unions, that I did not agree with. As the Regan years passed and I grew older and wiser I withdrew my membership from the party and became an independent. Then I would not be bound by any one party but could vote for the person my research showed was the best for the country. So now you know. I am first and foremost for the woman or man that had demonstrated his love for this nation and for the principles on which it was founded.

You appear to believe that the Tea Party and the Republican Party are the same. Have you not heard or read how the long time Republican Party members are extremely upset with

See Derflinger, page 5A

Get real with God

Dear Editor,

The truth shall set you free - this was our pastor's message last Sunday from the pulpit about how truth has been covered over by the lies and compromising folks that say it's okay, if it feels good do it or if something isn't broke, then don't fix it attitude, but yet many folks in our government system from the smallest to the highest office in America want to get elected over and over again, so they stretch the truth. Stretch it until it became an outlandish lie to satisfy their own agenda of destroying our nation from within and we as Americans who love our dear country, just sit back and let the lies come forth, like it was no big deal. Don't worry about it, it will just go away, well folks it's here to stay, until we get right with God and pray to Him for the help we need to turn the nation's lies back into the truth of God's Word. Election is next month, please go and vote from your heart, not what your head tells you and remember if we want our nation to turn back to God, then we have to vote for folks who honor God, folks who will not be afraid to speak for the rights of the American people that are fed up with lies upon lies. It's time folks to get real with God, before God gets real with us.

Frank F. Combs

Loving Dr. George

Dear Editor,

After reading the article concerning the dedication of Union General Hospital's Chapel to honor Dr. George Gowder, we fondly remembered Dr. George's many contributions to Union General over the years and wanted to elaborate somewhat on one choice made by Dr. Gowder that certainly had a tremendous impact on Union General Hospital and citizens of the area, that being his decision to return to Blairsville in August 1972.

By way of history, the Union County Clinic opened in 1959 and was renamed Union General Hospital after expansion in 1961. After working in the clinic/hospital for three years, Dr. George Gowder left Blairsville sometime in 1962 and moved his family to the Hall County/Gainesville area. After working there for ten years he made the choice to return to the mountains in August 1972. At that time because of lack of good physicians and poor hospital administration, Union General Hospital was struggling financially to remain open. At that same time, Mr. Leon Davenport was newly appointed administrator of the hospital. He

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Georgia On My Mind...

Leif Erikson discovered America

Dear Editor,

My comments are in regard to Mr. Danny Parris's *It's On My Mind* column entitled Fabulous Fall in the Oct. 8 issue of your informative and pleasurable newspaper.

Fall is a wonderful and beautiful season in the mountains, Mr. Parris's use of the word fall in his article and its double entendres were entertaining, and it's awesome that he got married and had children in the fall. But I have to correct him in his statement that "Columbus discovered America in the fall".

In this day and age we have to be culturally correct, and a more appropriate statement would be - for those who believe that America was actually found - that "Columbus discovered America for the Europeans in the fall," or perhaps "Columbus discovered America for 'civilized' people in the fall," as American Indians, Aztecs, and other indigenous peoples, fellow human beings, had lives and culture in North and South America way before "Columbus discovered it."

Because of current day explorations and findings, there is further evidence that Leif Erikson, a Norse explorer, actually landed in America and identified its existence for the Europeans nearly 500 years before Christopher Columbus did. But in all truism, America has been occupied by the human species for thousands of years.

See Moore, page 5A

Raw Deal

Dear Editor,

Gov. Deal came to Blairsville a couple of weeks ago and bragged about his record. Don't be fooled. While the national unemployment rate is 5.9 percent; under his leadership, the unemployment rate in GA is 8.1 percent putting our state 51st in the nation. Yes, we have low state taxes, what he doesn't tell us is that we depend on the federal government for 38.9 percent of our state budget, the 8th highest rate of federal dependency in our nation. Yet he blocked the Medicaid expansion which would bring \$45 billion and over 70,000 jobs to our state and would be paid for totally by the federal government for the first three years and then at a rate of 90 percent thereafter. He has repeatedly come out against equal pay for women, cut health care for state employees and laid off hundreds of social workers.

He has underfunded schools every year that he has been in office. Georgia is 35th in the nation in spending for education and invests nearly \$1,400 less per student than the national average. This results in increased class sizes because of teacher firings, shorter school years, lack of teacher training, the inability to fund technology, etc.

Gov. Deal slashed the budget for the HOPE Scholarship. The number of recipients fell from 256,000 in 2010 to less than 160,000 this year.

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Hunting Stories

I spent each fall roaming the hills of Northwest Georgia. There was an old man in our community that was known as Chester. He hated crows because they always managed to eat up his garden. So, one day Chester told me that he would give me 3 shotgun shells for each dead crow I delivered to him.

Early one morning I set up a blind on the edge of a pine thicket and called in a bunch of crows. I killed 2 of them and promptly took them to Chester. He lived on a knob overlooking the road and behind his house was a steep bluff with a small creek at the bottom. I gave Chester the dead crows and he gave me 6 shotgun shells. As I walked away I saw Uncle Johnny walk out of the back of his house and throw the crows off the bluff. After he walked back into the house I walked through the woods to the creek and back toward his house and the steep bluff. There I found the dead crows, picked them up and waited until later in the day and took them back to Uncle Johnny.

I would use this trickery on Uncle Johnny for the next 2 years. I was able to trick the old man out of hundreds of shotgun shells. Eventually, my conscious got the best of me and I confessed my sins to Uncle Johnny. I thought I was in for a whooping. After I told the old man my story he stared at me with a gruff look. Then he gave me a lecture about telling the truth. I felt like a whipped puppy. But, then Uncle Johnny began to laugh and he continued laughing. Every part of him was shaking he was laughing so hard. After he had calmed down Uncle Johnny told me that he thought I was the best hunter he had ever met. I said, "Nope, just sneaky."

Later, I graduated to squirrel hunting and when I turned 17 I found a new type of hunting. A fellow took me on my first deer hunt. I really enjoy deer hunting. However, my type of hunting is not what you see on TV. When I hunt there is usually a long, steep walk involved. I can't afford to purchase an ATV to drive to a stand and I usually hunt on public land. I enjoy hunting isolated places 2-3 miles away from the truck. I guess I am crazy but, I don't want to be around a crowd of people when I am hunting. So, I pick hard-to-get to and out-of-the-way places to deer hunt. I walked into Slaughter Gap one morning to watch a lead off the top of the mountain when the following story occurred.

By the time daylight arrived the truck was 2 miles away and 700 feet lower in elevation. There I was minding my own business watching for a buck deer. It was a beautiful morning for deer hunting. The leaves were a mixture of brilliant colors. There was a nip in the air and the sky was black intermingled with twinkling

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



The 10 Organizational Myths of Chambers of Commerce - Part 1

There are a lot of misunderstandings about the roles and scope of services of Chambers of Commerce. I ran this series of columns almost two years ago and received a lot of great feedback. Because we still have a lot of questions and misunderstandings as to the Chamber of Commerce, I have decided to run them again. Therefore, over the next few weeks I want to again debunk the most common myths regarding the Chamber of Commerce. Let's begin.

Myth 1: The Chamber is an entity of the local government.

Reality: We have a deep respect for and great partnership with our local government. However, the Chamber is its own 501 (c) (6) organization which is an association of persons/ members having a common business interest and its purpose is to promote this common business interest. The mission of our Chamber is to positively impact our community and members by facilitating tourism, economic, and cultural development. Our employees are not county employees. The only tax money we receive is a portion of the local hotel/tourist tax which, by law, must be earmarked for tourism advertising and promotion. Therefore, we depend on our membership to support the business programs

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It's the Great Pumpkin (Pie)

Charlie Brown was in search of The Great Pumpkin back in 1966. The Union County Farmers Market will be doing the same nearly 50 years later. This Saturday, Oct. 18th, The Great Butter-nut Creek Pumpkin Contest and Celebration will be held at the Market from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. The competition is a regional contest, with winners being eligible for a National award.

I've always been a sucker for anything pumpkin and pumpkin spiced. From candles and room scents to muffins and my morning coffee, this time of year, I can never get enough of this orange squash. Each fall season since I moved to Blairsville 15 years ago, I enjoy going to my favorite Pumpkin Pusher, Jason Clemmons, at Sunrise Grocery, and picking out my decorative pumpkins for my home.

One year I managed to get to Burt's Pumpkin Patch for a photo shoot with my dear friend Pat Gray. To this day, the images I captured on that trek are my favorite, bar even my photos of my Italian travels.

Jason Gagne is Union County's own Charlie Brown. Last year Jason entered a pumpkin he raised at his pumpkin patch in Blairsville in the Yadkin Valley (Tennessee) Great Pumpkin Weigh-Off. The pumpkin weighed in at 1,010 lbs. Jason won the grand prize of \$1,000. It wasn't Jason's best effort. He holds the current state record in GA with a prior pumpkin that weighed in at 1252 lbs.

What does one do with a giant pumpkin? Maybe make a giant Pumpkin Pie? According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the largest pumpkin pie weighed in at 3,699 lbs. and was made by New Bremen Giant Pumpkin Growers (USA) at the New Bremen Pumpkinfest in New Bremen, OH, on 25 September 2010.

The diameter of the pie was 20 ft. The crust was made of 440 sheets of dough and the other ingredients were pumpkin, evaporated milk, eggs, sugar, salt, cinnamon and pumpkin spice. I'm sorry, but if there wasn't a tanker truck filled with whip cream, I wouldn't be interested in attempting to eat the world's largest pumpkin pie. For me, this custardy, spicy, decadent dessert just has to be served with ice cold whip cream.

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