

Bust...from Page 1A

7 ounces of marijuana, approximately 200 grams of methamphetamine, assorted drug-related objects and what is believed to be 5 pounds of ginseng, Sgt. Dyer said.

Other seized items included a *Smith & Wesson* 9 mm handgun, several pocketknives, and almost \$1,700 in cash, Sgt. Dyer said.

The arrest of Ridley did not go without incident. The 38-year-old Lafayette man, who was wanted in Walker County, refused to exit the white Ford Explorer driven by Ekeberg, 35, of Hiwassee.

Ridley struggled with Sgt. Dyer, and Blairsville Police Officer Dustin Walker. The officers asked Ridley to step out of the vehicle. Ridley refused and they tried to remove him from the vehicle by force.

The end result: Both Sgt. Dyer, and Officer Walker, used Tasers to gain control of Ridley during the incident.

The stop, by Officer Walker, began after he noticed erratic driving behavior by Ekeberg as she drove her white Ford Explorer, Sgt. Dyer said.

"The vehicle was coming into town on Georgia 515, and I noticed the driver was failing to maintain its lane," Officer Walker said. "I turned around on the vehicle and noticed it was weaving in and out of the lane. When I caught up to the vehicle, it had been pulled into the Circle K West parking lot."

Officer Walker pulled his patrol cruiser into the First Baptist Church parking lot and observed the vehicle. The passenger, James Ridley, 38, exited the vehicle and went into the store. The vehicle remained in the store parking lot for 10-to-15 minutes.

"The vehicle finally moved and pulled out onto



Officer Dustin Walker the Murphy Highway, and I pulled out behind them," Officer Walker said. "When they pulled back onto Georgia 515, the driver made a wide, deliberate turn and was driving really slow."

Officer Walker initiated a traffic stop near the entrance of North Georgia Technical College, off Georgia 515, followed by a traffic stop of the Explorer in front of North Georgia Technical College's campus.

"I approached the driver and asked her some questions. She gave me what turned out to be a false name," Officer Walker said. "I spoke with the passenger. He appeared very nervous. He gave me a false name as well. No answer was consistent; he kept changing his date of birth."

Officer Walker contacted Sgt. Dyer about the stop and asked for assistance. Officer Walker asked Ekeberg if there was anything illegal in the vehicle. She answered no and consented to a search by law enforcement.

Ridley continued to give both officers an incorrect name and date of birth.

"We asked the gentleman to show us his hands because he kept reaching into a bag on the floorboard. He said he was just reaching for

his cellphone. We opened the door to the vehicle, when that happened, Sgt. Dyer noticed a spoon with a residue on it," Officer Walker said. "We asked the gentleman to step out of the vehicle. At first, he did step out of the vehicle. Sgt. Dyer was going to pat him down and make sure he didn't have any weapons on him. We were suspicious because he kept reaching into the bag on the floorboard."

"When Sgt. Dyer started patting him down, he got back in the vehicle and said that we weren't going to pat him down. He said he wasn't going to get back out of the vehicle," Officer Walker said. "We gave him several commands to show his hands and get out of the vehicle. He continued to reach for something in the bag."

"We attempted to take him out of the vehicle and at that point he started fighting us, throwing things," Officer Walker said. "He told us he wasn't coming out of the vehicle. At that point I advised him that if he didn't get out of the vehicle, I would have to Taser him."

"I then pulled my Taser, I dry-stunned him once, he came out of the vehicle and went to the ground," Officer Walker said. "He put his hands in front of him and we didn't know if he was grabbing for something in his waistband. We gave him more verbal commands for him to show us his hands and he refused to do so."

"I attempted to use the Taser again, but he had a real thick leather jacket on. I used the Taser, but it wasn't going through that leather jacket. Sgt. Dyer was able to get his Taser underneath the jacket, he then complied and put his hands behind his back and we were able to handcuff him,"

Officer Walker said.

After taking Ridley into custody, Sgt. Dyer looked to see what Ridley was reaching for in the bag. It was a thermos, and inside were several grams of methamphetamine, Officer Walker said.

"We then searched the rest of the vehicle and continued finding multiple bags of methamphetamine, marijuana, pills, needles, ginseng, and firearm," Officer Walker said.

"The firearm was loaded with one bullet in the chamber," Sgt. Dyer said. "Both the driver and passenger were convicted felons. Neither one should have had a firearm with them."

Ridley, officers said, had almost \$1,700 in cash in his pockets.

Officers also confiscated multiple drug-related objects that included pipes, spoons, a marijuana grinder, and several un-opened syringes, Officer Walker said.

Ekeberg was charged with trafficking methamphetamine; five counts possession of a controlled substance in violation of Georgia's Controlled Substance Act; illegal possession of dangerous drugs; possession of a firearm by a convicted felon; possession of drug-related objects; six counts possession of drugs not in their original containers; no driver's license; and failure to maintain lane.

Ridley was charged with three counts possession of a controlled substance; possession of a firearm by a convicted felon; three counts of obstruction; possession of drug-related objects; three counts drugs not in their original container.

Both remain in the Union County Jail pending a first court appearance before a Superior Court judge.

Townsend...from Page 1A

Mimm next year," Townsend said. "We're in middle Tennessee and Georgia. We're talking to a couple of marketing companies. We've got the gift shop up at Pappy's Plaza here in Blairsville."

Townsend also sang a couple of original songs, including *Same Old Outlaws*, *Minus One*, a tribute to his Country Music mentor Waylon Jennings.

"Jigger Bridges, myself and a friend wrote that song on my back porch in Nashville several years ago," Townsend

said. "Waymore's Outlaws recorded it. They play it on XM Sirius Radio still."

Townsend is the grandson of Jack McClure, an Appalachian moonshiner and local philanthropist from Young Harris. The North Georgia Mountains are plush with stories of McClure's quality bootleg spirits, his charitable giving, and his self-delivered justice to those who crossed him.

Bluegrass icons Lester Flat and Earl Scruggs even enjoyed the famous brew a time

or two when they were in the area according to Townsend.

McClure's career in bootlegging began during the Great Depression and continued until his death in 1969 when he died of pancreatic cancer.

Townsend was only 2 years old when his 'infamous' grandfather died, but the stories of his 'shining days' lived on and the family stories of his grandfather sparked an interest in Granddaddy Mimm that could not be squelched.

"I began to question

my mother, aunts, and uncles about the recipe," said Townsend. "With their blessing, I began the process of producing Granddaddy Mimm using the same recipe and the same simple ingredients with all the taste and tradition enjoyed by folks back in the day of Mimm."

A story on Townsend, Blairsville, his music and Granddaddy Mimm will air soon on Robin Meade's *Morning Express* on CNN.

Clean up Day at Cemetery rescheduled to Nov. 15

By Charles Duncan
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Inclement weather and a blustery day caused the cancellation of the clean up day at the historic Old Blairsville Cemetery on Saturday.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said that the make up day for that event would be Nov. 15.

"It was just best to put it off until another day," Commissioner Paris said. "The wind was blowing so hard, and the temperatures were so cold. It was just for the best to pick another day to do this."

Originally brought to the attention of Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley and Paris by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the historic cemetery is the final resting place of many of the county's earliest settlers.

With 37 marked graves, and approximately 105 unmarked graves, the cemetery



Low temperatures, high winds and wet conditions prompted a reschedule of clean up day at Old Blairsville Cemetery. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

is packed with history.

A recent radar detection device shows 105 unmarked graves at the cemetery, Paris said. The plan is to restore and preserve the cemetery, and enclose it with a wrought-iron fence.

The project is moving forward, but it's still in the starter's block, Commissioner Paris said.

"We know a lot more today than we knew a few

months ago," Paris said. "We have some Boy Scouts who will be helping to clean the headstones. Vince Evans, from Gainesville, who is a cemetery professional, will be here to supervise and show folks how to brush a liquid product on the grave markers to clean most of the residue," Paris said.

"Vince Evans was the overseer of Alta Vista Cemetery in Gainesville for 15 years," Paris said. "He's given us lots of advice on what to use and how to clean the markers."

Mayor Conley said that the Union County Historical Society has a list of the people buried in the cemetery.

"We're hoping that people will get interested in this project," Mayor Conley said. "We're hoping family members will be able to read this story and tell us if they have loved ones buried here."

Pete White said the Sons of Confederate Veterans have raised \$2,000 for the project.

Commissioner Paris said donations have been coming in, but more are needed.

If you'd like to make a donation for the restoration of the Old Blairsville Cemetery, contact White, Mayor Conley at City Hall, Commissioner Paris at the Union County Commissioner's Office or Bud Akins with the Union County Historical Society.

Commissioner Paris urges folks who want to help with the project to please come on out and help on Nov. 15 at 9 a.m.