

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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December 4, 2013

Mason: Wife beaten to death by husband

By Charles Duncan
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Union County sheriff's Deputy Lamar Dyer was the first responder to a 911 call on Nov. 25 to Amy Lynn Drive in northern Union County.

The call by 67-year-old Robert Taylor reported that his wife Fran Taylor had fallen down a flight of steps leading to the family basement.

It didn't take Deputy Dyer long to realize that the desperation call for the critically injured woman didn't match the evidence in front of him. Fran Taylor was dead and her injuries differed dramatically from an accidental fall, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Deputy Dyer called Detective Andrew Hammond, who, once on the scene, decided that, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and their Crime Scene Investigators would be needed.

Fran Taylor, a 63-year-old housewife was dead, and her 67-year-old husband Robert Taylor would soon be behind bars, Sheriff Mason said.



Robert Taylor

Fran Taylor died of blunt force trauma to the head on Monday, Nov. 25, Sheriff Mason said.

An autopsy by state medical examiners revealed that Fran Taylor was struck in the head more than 40 times with a blunt object, Hammond said.

"The autopsy shows that she was struck in the head more than 40 times," Hammond said. "Falling down a flight of steps as the cause of death didn't match the autopsy results."

The incident unfolded at the couple's home on Amy Lynn Drive, off of Moccasin Road, Sheriff Mason said.

Union County 911 dispatchers received a 911 call from the couple's home on Nov. 25. It was reported that Fran Taylor had fallen down a flight of steps leading to the family basement.

Deputy Dyer arrived, and the incident shifted from an accident investigation, to what sheriff's investigators say is an active homicide investigation, Sheriff Mason said.

Fran Taylor's body was sent to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Crime Laboratory. Autopsy results show she died of blunt force trauma to the head, Detective Hammond said.

GBI special agents and a crime scene investigation crew came to the Taylors' home. They secured search warrants and once received, began to process what they believed to be a murder crime scene.

Investigators immediately found blood spatter evidence, and obvious signs of a struggle once inside the home.

Hammond said that Rob-



Fran Taylor

ert Taylor changed his story time after time when talking with investigators.

"His story changed a few times," Hammond said. "His first story was that his wife fell down the steps leading to the basement. That changed, once we got in the house and found blood evidence. He told us later that he and his wife got into an argument and she chased him through the house. He said she tripped and fell down

See *Murder*, 2A

Hill anxious to show off new Senior Center expansion

By Charles Duncan
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Union County Senior Center Director Kathy Hill is all smiles and ready to show the community an expanded Union County Senior Center.

On Monday, Dec. 9, at 1 p.m., she'll get that chance with an Open House at the center, off Georgia 515, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony included. Refreshments will be provided.

A \$295,687 Community Development Block Grant provided funding for the physical expansion of the Senior Center, to provide programs, activities, and services to an increased number of Senior Citizens in Union County.

The expansion was necessary. Senior Center workers and volunteers were jammed into the building; there was barely any elbowroom. Instead of focusing on programs for Seniors, Hill and Senior Center workers, Hill and volunteers were spending more time breaking down tables and moving and shuffling from one room to the next.



Kathy Hill

The Senior Center does programs for Seniors that include exercise, art classes, Wii Bowling, Tai Chi, quilting, line dancing, bingo, yoga and jewelry making. It also hosts an Alzheimer's respite, Hill said.

Along came that six-figure grant from the Department of Community Affairs, and the rest is history, to be witnessed on Dec. 9.

"Part of our expansion was for our Alzheimer's room," Hill said. "Now we

See *Seniors*, 2A

Santa here for Kris Kringle Market

By Charles Duncan
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It is deer season, but, hunters will be asked to refrain from shooting anywhere near the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday.

That's to avoid spooking the reindeer as Santa Claus is headed to Blairsville for the Fourth Annual Kris Kringle Market.

Kris Kringle Market opens on Friday, Dec. 6 at 4 p.m. and continues Saturday, Dec. 7 at 10 a.m.

"We will have a bonfire on Friday evening where children roast marshmallows," said Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "There will be a Christmas Train on Saturday, which can be ridden by children. Santa Claus will be with us on Saturday."

There's a holiday dessert contest that can be entered on Saturday morning by bringing

See *Kringle*, 2A



Kris Kringle Market figures to be as popular as ever at the Union County Farmers Market on Friday and Saturday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Locals flock to Reece Center



Byron Herbert Reece

By Charles Duncan
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They came from near and far to learn more about the *Mountain Poet*.

The Second Reece Farm and Heritage Center Christmas Open House brought newcomers, passersby and lots of locals out on Saturday and Sunday.

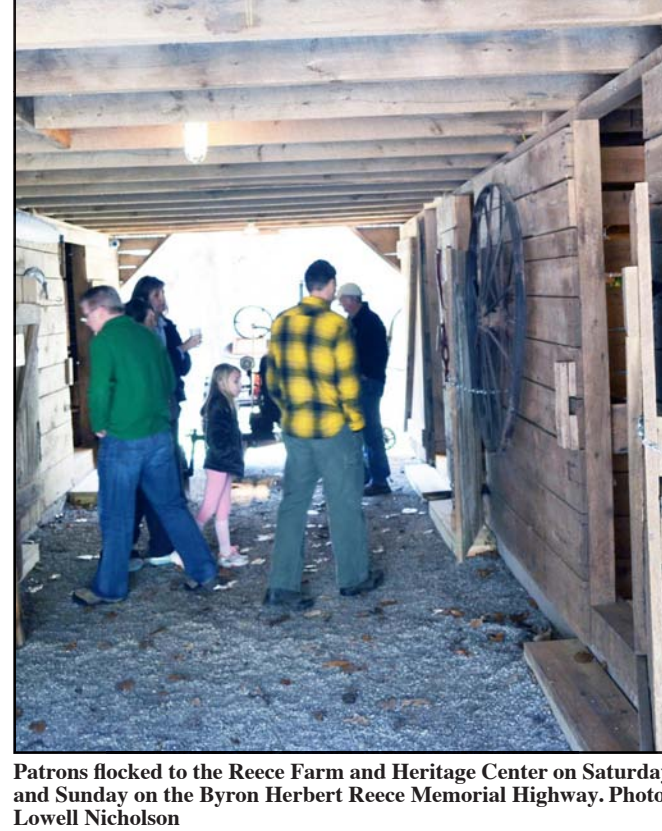
More than 300 people attended the event intent on showcasing one of North Georgia's historic attractions, the works and way of life of Byron Herbert Reece.

The curious came to learn the origins of the words, so eloquent and prolific, that defined the poetry of the Farmer Poet, "Hub" Reece.

Reece, who attended school in rural Union County, was a farmer first, and a self-made poet second. He read books that would seem strange to locals in those days. The books of choice in Reece's day included manuals on farming and learning how to operate a tractor.

At an early age, Reece had read the Bible and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, penned in 1678, books that would often influence his writing. By the age of 15, he was publishing poems in the *North Georgia News*. After high school he attended Young Harris College where he found a close group of friends who encouraged him to continue to write his poetic prose.

Reece didn't disappoint. The *Prairie Schooner* journal published *Lest the Lonesome Bird* in 1943. *Ballad of the Bones and Other Poems*, a collection of Reece's poetry, soon followed,



Patrons flocked to the Reece Farm and Heritage Center on Saturday and Sunday on the Byron Herbert Reece Memorial Highway. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

in 1945.

Reece was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for *Bow Down in Jericho*, his 1950 follow-up to his first, critically acclaimed publication. That same year, Reece published *Better a Dinner of Herbs*, his first novel. In 1952, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship for fiction, and he also published a third volume of poetry, *A Song of Joy*. In 1955, he unveiled his second novel, *The Hawk and the Sun* and his final volume of poetry, *The Season of Flesh*.

Reece is a lasting example of Hub Reece's life, and what he had to do to survive before the first word of poetic prose was penned, said local historian Jerry Taylor.

"The Reece Farm and Heritage Center is a good example of Appalachian Heritage," said Taylor. "Farming was a way of life in early Appalachia."

From the sweat of his

See *Reece*, 3A

Weekend filled with Christmas Spirit

By Charles Duncan
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On Monday, the Annual Tour of Trees kicked off at the Union County Community Center.

Blairsville-Union County Chamber President Cindy Williams invites everyone to come enjoy more than 30 trees and wreaths decorated by local businesses.

"The Tour of Trees is brought to you by the Tourism Committee of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce," Williams said. "It's sponsored in part by the Northeast Georgia Board of Realtors."

The Tour of Trees continues through Dec. 28th, Williams said.

The holiday fun continues beginning Thursday, Dec. 5th and lasting through Saturday, Dec. 7th, as the Annual Jingle Bell Buys gets in full swing.

For three days only during normal store business hours you can save 50 percent on select items or Buy One, Get One Free promotions at 32 Union County businesses. Participating businesses include retailers, restaurants, service businesses and more. Contact the Chamber at (706) 745-5789 to sign up and receive this year's coupons.

The Union County Historical Society kicks off its



Cindy Williams

Christmas Season on Friday with a Christmas Concert featuring the North Georgia Chamber Symphony at 7 p.m. The concert will be held in the Historic Courthouse upstairs in the Historic Union County Courthouse. Admission is free, but donations are welcomed.

On Saturday, Dec. 7, Downtown becomes part of the Polar Express. It features an Open House at the Historic Union County Courthouse, a Live Nativity Scene at the Mountain Life Museum, an opportunity for pictures with Santa Claus at the Historic Courthouse, and of course the Annual Christmas Parade in Downtown Blairsville.

The parade starts at 2 p.m. and it's the quote, unquote, kickoff of the Christmas season here in Blairsville. This will be a prime time to bring the kids out because Santa Claus will be here.

The annual Christmas

Parade winds its way through the streets of Downtown Blairsville. It features holiday floats, antique cars, horses, local civic groups, churches, the Union County High School Marching Band, and of course, Santa, and Mrs. Claus.

Following the Christmas Parade on Saturday, the Holiday Season activities continue with the first Jolly Christmas Event from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Union County Community Center. The event includes musical performances, crafts for the kids, train rides, face painting, storytelling and refreshments.

"Folks can come tour the beautifully decorated trees and wreaths as part of this event," Williams said. "Please bring non-perishable items to donate to the Union County Food Pantry and/or unwrapped toys for the Toys for Kids program sponsored by the Veterans Organizations."

The Historical Society Christmas includes an Open House on Saturday at the Butt-Mock House, also known as the Mountain Life Museum, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Included in the Open House, will be a tour of the Payne Cabin, built in 1861, which represents Union County life in the mid-1800s.

It also includes *Pictures with Santa* at the Historic Courthouse on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. If you're in line by 1 p.m., you will see Santa and his elves.

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Sponsor a Foster Child for Christmas
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BASKETBALL:
Tuesday, Dec. 3rd @ Andrews 6 PM
Friday, Dec. 6th vs. Lumpkin Co. 7 PM
Saturday, Dec. 7th @ Towns Co. 6 PM

WRESTLING:
King of the Mountain Tournament @ Towns County
Friday and Saturday Dec. 6th and 7th