

Opinions

Everybody has one

Mayan Myths

With all the talk about the Mayan Calendar and the end of the world, I was one happy camper when I saw Channel 2 Action News light up my TV on Friday morning.

No, it's not my favorite TV show, it's just the television channel that wakes me up in the mornings.

Another myth down the drain, the world did not come to an end.

I'm here to dispel another myth, that the Mayans are responsible for the Native American holy grounds in the Track Rock community.

I'm sure you've heard the hoopla, that some famous amateur archeologist has developed a theory that when the Mayans disappeared in Mexico, the reason was they had made their way to the North Georgia Mountains.

Well, if Richard Thornton was such a famous "amateur" archeologist, why did we not hear about him before his Mayan myth.

According to his resume, he has a noted background in architecture, having designed some of the landmark monuments in Sweden and Native American architecture in Oklahoma.

Somehow, Richard convinced The History Channel that the Mayans were an architectural force in the North Georgia Mountains around 800 A.D.

Richard also claims a connection to the Muscogee Creek Nation, something that Emman Spain, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, of the Muscogee Creek Nation, says is totally untrue.

Well, here's the deal. No one for sure knows the origin of the incredible artifacts in the Track Rock community. One thing is for certain, there's some pretty incredible evidence left behind that dates back to at least 1,000 A.D.

The first archeological study of the area didn't take place until 2009. Why? You're guess is as good as mine.

The bottom line is that we have one of the greatest archeological attractions known to mankind. One man says it belongs to the work of the Mayans. I believe that about as far as I can throw the man who claims it.

If you follow North Georgia history, you know the history of the Creek and Cherokee nations is extensive here. That is more than likely the people responsible for this great archeological occurrence.

What do we do about it? Well, we need to get the Creeks, Cherokees, federal government, state government and local government on the same page of what to do with this magnificent archeological evidence.

The latter day Creek and Cherokee people are certain this find is holy ground, a ceremonial place visited by their ancestors.

The U.S. Forest Service is charged with the protection of the landscape via an agreement with the Creek and Cherokee nations.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, the fewer people making trails to the site, the less there is to worry about regarding the physical integrity of the site.

I think it's highly possible to preserve the integrity of the site and at the same time take advantage of the great tourist attraction that it can become.

Maybe building an interpretive center that deals with the history of the Creek and Cherokee nations in North Georgia, especially Track Rock Gap, is a plan.

It's time to come to the table for immediate discussion. It's just a thought.

At least I don't believe it's El Dorado.

Getting around Union

Q. Could you tell me when the Union County Bus Service was started and how?

A. Union County's transportation service began in August of 2002 with a Transportation Grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation. (the actual grant money came from the Federal Highway funds) The grant paid 80% of the equipment and startup cost at the time. The purpose of the program was to provide transportation to rural communities where many of the citizens had no other transportation options other than neighbors and families.

Q. How is the service currently funded?

A. Continuation funding is provided through the Federal Transportation funds, distributed through the state GDOT. The funding pays for 50% of the operation cost. 25% is paid from the fares paid by the riders and 25% is paid with property tax dollars. We have many people in our community that rely on this service.

Q. How many buses does the county have and what is the cost to use the service?

A. The county operates two ten passenger buses and each bus has a lift for wheelchairs or persons on walkers. Rides are provided to and from the doctor, grocery store, pharmacy, bank, school or wherever you need to go within the county. At this time transportation is not provided to Gainesville or Atlanta due to the cost involved. The charge for this service is \$3.00 for the first mile and \$.50 for each additional mile-one way. There is no charge for a spouse or caregiver going along to provide assistance. Riders under 12 must be accompanied by an adult 18 or over and child safety seats must be provided for all children less than six years of age.

Q. What is the annual cost to the Union County taxpayers for the operation of the bus service?

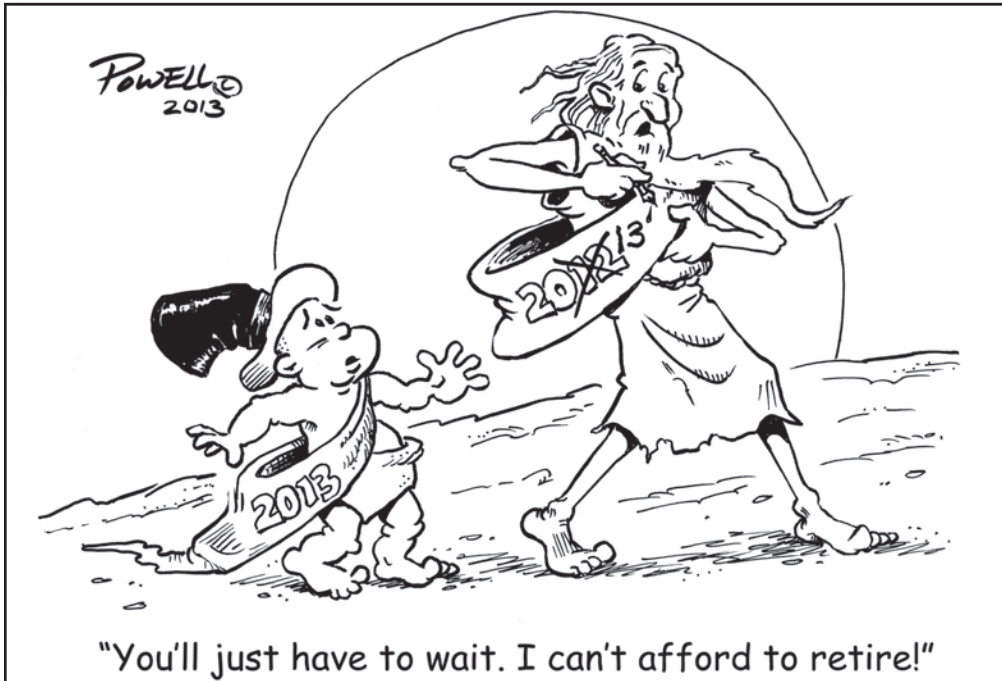
A. The current net cost to the county is \$35,453.00 to operate the service.

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Charles Duncan

Straight Shooting



Explore, Adore & Restore

Matthew records that "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem" (Matt. 2:1). They had come searching for Jesus, the King of the Jews. Their journey had begun when they saw a strange star. Their stated purpose was that they had come to worship Jesus, the Christ of God.

Since my early teenage years I have been an observer of people. It is an interesting and helpful hobby. I think it is interesting to observe the responses of people groups at Christmas. I assure you worship is not on everyone's mind.

Some people literally **DEPLORE** the Christmas season. Atheists are not too thrilled about the season. In fact, many of them are wretched, miserable and sad. Some of these people want to remove every visible symbol that reminds us of Christ! Every nativity scene, angel, shepherd, wise man, and every word that conveys Christ or God. It really does not make sense to me. Why would an atheist spend his life fighting something that he does not believe exists in the first place?

Other groups **IGNORE** Christ. They are like the chief priests and scribes of Jesus' day. They are too busy with the traditional to understand that a baby changed the entire course of human history.

Much of our Christmas tradition is more about **SHOPPING**, than it is **SALVATION**.

By the way, do you know what all that dangling mistletoe means in all the business places? It means that you can kiss your money goodbye!

We really observe a lot of Christmas traditions that are good and healthy for us. However, if you ignore Christ you have missed Christmas. There are groups that **DEPLORE** and **IGNORE** Christ at Christmas, but there are multitudes that **EXPLORE** and **ADORE** Christ.

Luke tells us (Luke 2:8-20) that a group of shepherds were visited by angels and informed that a Savior for all people had been born. They hastened to find Mary and Joseph and the child Jesus. They **EXPLORED** the Message and hurriedly came to **ADORE** the Christ.

Matthew tells us of those wise men who came to explore and adore Him. They brought gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. Gold is the king of metals and was considered to be a gift suited for a king. Frankincense is the gift for Deity. It was used in the temple sacrifices. The aroma of Frankincense was thought to be pleasing to God. This gift was symbolic

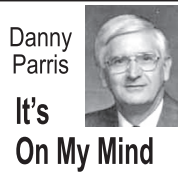
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Celebrating Success in 2012

As we draw the curtain on 2012, I would like to take a moment to celebrate the many successes of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. Year after year, I am overwhelmed with the milestones we reach and the progress we are able to make. Thanks to a great staff, Board and membership, this past year was no exception. Here are a few of the highlights.

The lifeblood of our Chamber is our membership, and membership in the Chamber is strong. Currently at 560 members, this is a 2% increase over the same time in 2011. In keeping with our mission to positively impact our community and members by facilitating tourism, economic and cultural development, the Chamber offered a variety of business education classes as well as networking events to broaden the knowledge of our members and promote communication and support among Union County business owners. In 2012 the Chamber introduced many new programs including our business roundtables, buy local program, and Chamber U classes. We successfully hosted the July 4th fireworks display and the Leadership Union Class of 2012. Our staff continues to serve on a number of committees for the betterment of Union County including the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority, Blairsville Scottish Festival and Highland Games, Appalachian Trail Community, Union County Intergency Group, Northeast Georgia Board of Realtors Affiliate, and the Northeast Georgia Mountain Travel Association to name a few. Finally, the Chamber continues to be the lead organization for tourism promotion in Union County. Always tackling new initiatives and incorporating the use of technology, we have proudly served over 14,000 visitors in 2012 alone and had over 121,000 website hits, an increase of 12% over 2011. Most certainly, without the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce, these individu-

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Danny Parris

It's On My Mind

Christmas Gifts

Christmas brings back many memories to each of us. Christmas brings memories of various gifts of which I received through the years. I can remember getting stockings stuffed with all kinds of goodies. For example, I love tangerines to this day because my grandmother used to give them to me at Christmas. And I remember getting those candied orange slices at Christmas. I also remember getting those soft peppermint sticks at Christmas each year. (Did you know you can still get those candied orange slices and pepper mint sticks at Foodland?) I also remember getting those Ice Box Fruit Cakes at Christmas each year. My mother made those things and I would make myself sick eating them. I still have a sweet tooth for those kinds of sweets. Ruby Jones makes a Pecan Pie for me each year at Christmas and it is really good.

Christmas has always been a special time for my family. My grandparents celebrated Christmas by decorating Cedar Trees and by answering the phone with a special greeting. The day after Thanksgiving my grandmother would greet telephone callers with "Christmas Gift" instead of hello. She told me that as a youngster she would go with large groups of people to serenade their neighbors. The group of people would begin the serenade by saying "Christmas Gift" and then the group would sing a Christmas Carol to their neighbor. The neighbors would respond by tossing hard candy to the group after the song.

Just after the turn of the century my Grandfather's family experienced some hard times. My grandfather was only about 4 years old when his Uncle joined the Army and went to fight in WWI. Then the influenza epidemic came through North Alabama and two of my grandfather's aunts died while in their teens. Then Papa's youngest Uncle was accidentally shot while playing with an old pistol. These problems placed a strain on the marriage of my great-great grandparents, John and Martha Cummings. I don't know exactly what happened, but, John left his wife of more than 20 years and ran off with another woman. All of this was bad and created hard feelings. But, after a year or so Papa's uncles and aunts found out their Daddy had run off with his sister's daughter. These two ran off to Missouri and raised another family. The Cummings family in Alabama was extremely bitter.

Some of John's sons never forgave him for the destruction of their family. He came back for a couple of visits, but, a couple of his sons would have nothing to do with him. But, time has a way of healing many sore spots. As the years went by John became more and more

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Reflections versus Resolutions

This is the annual week where we designate a period of time to determine what our New Year resolutions will be. Taking charge of our health always seems to be tops on our list. I know that next Wednesday, the Wellness Center parking lot will be full. The ads for weight reduction programs will barrage us for the next thirty days. The drug ads encouraging you to seek pharmaceutical help in your resolve to quit smoking will become exhaustive, both online, on television and in print.

I've never been much for New Years resolutions. I quit smoking three decades ago, in April. When I decided that the weight was more than my bones could bear, I started my reduction program in the middle of June. When I made the decision to make a major career move or relocation, it was never on the first of January.

I like to take this week to reflect on the year that has passed. I think joyfully and gratefully about the people that have entered my life, and I silently honor those that I have had great affection that have departed.

I evaluate my successes and critique the failures. I note where I need to be more proactive and chastise myself for spending too much time doing non-productive things. When you are still a wage earner, non-productive equates to- you didn't get paid for your efforts. I go through this mental berating with half a heart. I'm never going to stop doing what I do, whether I get paid or not. It's just part of the reflection process.

I peruse the piles on my desk (and I mean piles) and I shake my head. Some things will never change. I think back to Sister Augustine, a stern nun who expected discipline out of her fifth graders. One day, when she told us to take out our geography books, I was struggling to get mine out from the rat's nest I had conjured

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JoAnne Leone

Farmers Market Moment

Letters

To the Editor

Glorifying Evil

Dear Editor,

Following the horrendous news of "the Execution of the Innocents," commentators brought up the subject of gun control.

I contend it is far more pervasive than controlling an inanimate object. The ultimate "control" is within the person who operates that object.

Consider the endemic PTSD of returning veterans. They know better than anyone how to use a multitude of automatic weapons. There have not been any accounts of their violating the safety of others. They are more likely to choose suicide rather than harm others.

The problem is not only the mind and minds that are not functionally "normal" but with the horrendous bombardment of sick excitement that demonstrates how and what to do. For an instant that person is in command and control of the situation no matter how horrendous. Their thoughts, feelings, reactions are of paramount importance, no one else matters. They have been conditioned to it. If it doesn't hurt them they cannot stop that overwhelming feeling of power.

Their suicide lets them escape and "win" over anyone who would "make them pay for what they have done."

The media, in all their multiple forms have glorified every aspect that we were taught was evil. There is no retribution for becoming a part of it... "It's just a game, a show, an action movie."

We don't fully understand what has been unleashed in the minds of those that feel confident of even considering such action. We must assume they are not weighing right or wrong but only their own overwhelming need to vindicate themselves in such action. In their minds there are no consequences, only them and the power they have at hand.

Are we now confronted with evil in a world that will not call it by its name?

Catherine Fiser,
Blairsville, GA

Carbon Monoxide warning

Dear Editor,

After the Carbon Monoxide scare at a school near Atlanta this past week, I would just like to offer a word of caution to any one who owns, or even plans on purchasing a CM Detector for their home, and for the schools around in the area as well. If I am wrong on this issue please by all means some one step up to correct me.

CM Detectors will NOT work on PRO-PANE, UNLESS they are specified they will. Most of them are for NATURAL GAS use. I did find some on eBay that says for BOTH Propane and Natural Gas.

I found this out myself several years ago when we installed a new gas oven after the one we had went out. Our service man found a little hole big enough for your little finger in the line at the back. He was so shocked he just had to go outside for awhile. He said it was a miracle we had not been totally blown away. I told him, and then showed him our CM Detector we had purchased from a local hardware store. He said they weren't worth any thing to us around up in here because we don't have Natural gas, and mainly use Propane. He said unless they specified FOR Propane as well, they were useless to us. Well, it must be true because it was right next to the oven up above the sink in the plug in there and NEVER went off. However, my cat use to sit right at the oven and would look underneath. We should have relied on the cat!

Any way, I hope this helps all of you out and as I have said if I am wrong then some one please correct me.
Have a happy life!
Mrs. Delores Barnes

The Reason for the Season

Dear Editor,

The recent tragedy in the Connecticut school reminds us of the fragility of life and the universal need for love and harmony in the homes of humankind.

In some respects, the occurrence of this event during the Advent season serves to exacerbate the heartbreak it evoked.

These children, preparing for a joyful holiday celebration, were in a moment of horrific evildoing deprived of life itself.

We struggle to comprehend the sinister and senseless nature of the act and to deal emotionally with the inexplicable feeling of loss and grief that even strangers to those suffering families experience.

But in another sense, the timing of this tragedy during this holy season affords us a context for both coping and hoping.

The renewal of our recognition of Emmanuel - "God is with us" - lends to languishing spirits a special strength and affirms again the certainty that because of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Word made flesh, nothing in all creation, including death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For many this year, it will be a sad/glad Christmas. We wish for you and yours an extra measure of the gladness as you celebrate the Incarnate God's appearance in human history!

We remain ever grateful for your friendship.
Love and peace,
John and Patti Kay

Congrats to the children

Dear Editor,

Congrats to the middle and high school choral students who presented a beautiful Christmas concert under the direction of Alicia Covington and Kathryn Nelson. My single disappointment happened when the middle grade students sang *The Hallelujah Chorus*. No more than a handful of visitors stood up. Shame, shame on us. *The Hallelujah Chorus* is like our National Anthem—with respect, everyone stands.

Dr. Ray Ashurst

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 4 Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card.

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