

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Batman

He's pretty much a mutt. An accident, born into a home that couldn't keep him and the tiniest cutest little fella you ever did see. I had my heart set on getting a dog (about six years ago now), despite my husband's insistence that it was the last thing we needed. I knew we needed this addition to the family. We have one son, and he was just barely a teenager at the time. I wanted a small dog, and was certain I wanted a neeedy one to fill the void of a kid who barely wanted to talk to his parents at that time in his life. Side note, be careful what you wish for. He's what some folks call a "Dorky," a mix of dachshund and Yorkie (and probably a few other things). He's comically long, and low to the ground, and super furry... just fur everywhere. He has little wisps of hair that extend off the tips of his somewhat floppy ears and a substantial mane around his pointy little head. When we got him, he was so tiny, he was just a tad more than a handful. And feisty as he could be. I figured he needed a tough name to compensate for his diminutive stature, and so, Batman it was. I'm kind of a comic book nerd anyway, so it was appropriate. But the best part of naming your dog Batman is that Petsmart (back in the suburbs) had to announce on the loudspeaker when he was ready for pick up, by name. Yes, hilarity normally ensued. Everyone thinks their pet is cute, but this dog would get any brawny looking grown man speaking baby talk as soon as spied him. "Who's a cute little guy? Who's the cutest?" Good stuff.

Well, as I mentioned, Batman grew up in the suburbs. He always had a flat backyard to roam around, a fence to peek through the cracks and bark at passers-by. He normally had some sort of water source, a kiddie pool, regular pool, or whatever we had at the place we lived. He would go for leashed walks around the neighborhood, tell those kids to "Get off my lawn" when they walked by. It was a cushy existence for an evolved canine.

When we moved to the mountains last year, Batman found himself in a whole new world of possibilities. A big sloping yard surrounded by trees and no fence and wildlife everywhere you turn. The very first day at our new house, before we even had a U-Haul unloaded, he found a log across a ditch and immediately decided to traverse it. He fell about halfway through it, letting off a pitiful YELP! Which sent us running to his aid. He lay there in the leaves, beside a

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Guest Editorial

Bettina Moore

Seeing Faith

In "The Last Crusade," Indiana Jones pursues the holy grail. Near the end of the journey he faces a chasm with no way to cross. "It's a leap of faith," he mutters, as he steps into the abyss. To his surprise, his foot lands on a bridge he cannot see.

It takes no climactic leap of faith for you to board an airliner to Paris. People have been riding the winds above the Atlantic Ocean for nearly 100 years since Charles Lindbergh showed us the way.

The difference between these two is blind faith vs. seeing faith. It matters because the Christian faith is not a blind faith. In its worst form, blind faith doesn't care about what is true - it believes anyway. Those who reject a religion of blind faith are right to do so, but don't accuse Christians of being taken captive by such "empty deception" (Col. 2:8). We see reasons to believe.

God has proven that He will reveal Himself in human history and reality. He showed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth person in the fiery furnace, and was overwhelmed by that reality of God Almighty. Thomas doubted no longer when he saw and touched the resurrected Jesus. Jesus even showed his authority to forgive sins by making the paralyzed man get up and walk (Matt. 9). All these believed because of evidence from their own eyes!

Do you see the evidence of the Bible? It had 40 human contributors spanning 1,500 years writing in three languages, yet it is a coherent narrative of human history and experience. It has hundreds of prophecies, some very specific, all written centuries before Jesus fulfilled them. It explains what you see now: the universe exists, evil persists, and morality is universal. It explains why you yearn for beauty, admire innocence, and cling to life. It explains brokenness, restoration, and hope. The Bible makes sense of the world as you experience it.

Do you see the evidence of creation? As you would expect, the more science discovers about the material world, the more it points to a prior intelligence. (I recommend Stephen Meyer's new book, "The Return of the God Hypothesis.") Creation is God's other "book." The Bible says, "His eternal power and di-

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Meeks Park (Part 3 of 3)

This week's questions talk about Meeks Park II and the Meeks Dog Park.

Q. What is the story on the outside exercise equipment? I've never heard of exercise equipment that is permanently installed for outside use.

A. The exercise equipment at Meeks Park II consists of various pieces of low impact exercise machines for use by the public, including exercise bikes, rowers, air walkers, a lat pull down machine, a chest press, and several more pieces. Some of this equipment is also wheelchair accessible. So there really is something for everyone. Most of the equipment utilizes your body weight to determine the difficulty.

Q. Does this equipment have to be reserved or can I just show up to use it?

A. The exercise equipment at Meeks Park II is first come/first served when it comes to usage. It is not uncommon to find couples and even their children working out together on the equipment. As a matter of fact, many trail walkers take a breather at this spot to work upper arms and abs and then they continue their walking routines.

Q. How does the kayak/canoe ramp work? Where do I go if I paddle upstream versus downstream?

A. This side of the park is carved out by the Nottely River that flows past the Meeks Park Kayak/Canoe Ramp. The ramp is a concrete slant that ends in the Nottely river and it is located between the adult exercise equipment and the Tate Grist Mill. Any non-motorized boats can use the ramp. Non-Motorized Boats include kayaks, canoes, paddle boards, small sailboats, and even crew rowing boats. Of these, you will primarily see folks unloading and paddling in kayaks. If you paddle upstream, you will float up the Nottely River. If you paddle downstream, you will float towards Lake Nottely. Paddling towards Lake Nottely will take you under State Hwy 515, and shortly thereafter, you will see a gazebo that extends over the water. This lagoon backs up to the Meeks Park Dog Park. As you can see, the beautiful flow between the parks is seen not only in walking trails, but also by water flow.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Habitat for Humanity

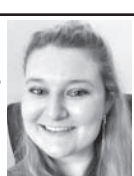
In honor of Valentine's Day, Habitat for Humanity and local businesses partnered up in an annual event called "Share the Love." For three days, local businesses donated proceeds when you shopped to Habitat for Humanity, hoping to further benefit our mission in making sure our community has affordable housing, safe and beneficial living.

We are so thankful for the opportunity to work closely with our local businesses here in Blairsville. Some of the local businesses that participated in this event include: Blairsville Printing, Blairsville Restaurant - Grits & Greens, Book Bound Bookstore, Cabin Coffee, Farmer's Daughter, The Farmhouse Company, from me 2 u, Granddaddy Mimm's Distillery, Keen Creations & Company, Lucky's Taqueria & Cantina, Mountain Life Mercantile, Pat's Hallmark Shop, Rustic Mountain Décor, S & S Smoothies and Supplements, Seasons Inn Motel & Plaza, Sugar Magnolia

See Habitat, page 5A

Habitat Happenings

Madelyn Bailey



Letters to the Editor

ESPLOST is Vital

Dear Editor,

Union County has been my home since I was a young boy, and I am thankful for the opportunity to experience all the benefits of growing up in this wonderful small town. As a 1995 graduate of Union County High School and a father to a student in our high school, I believe the Education SPLOST is vital to the continuing success of our students' development and growth. Our school and community have proven, through true dedication, the importance of creating a solid foundation for the future of our students and their career paths in life. The commitment of our taxpayers voting YES in the past years has resulted in providing additional enhanced resources that many of us did not have, such as theater, specialty technical trade education, advanced agriculture studies, and many more. These programs would have never been available, or, at least, not as comprehensive as they are now, if not for the \$0.01 tax that citizens, as well as visitors, have been investing in for over the past 20 years.

Growth is always inevitable. Our housing industry is rising, and tourists are flocking to our area due to the beauty, the American values we hold dear and the quality of people that make up our piece of heaven. By keeping the ESPLOST, it allows all the visitors who spend time in our town to contribute to these funds instead of the residents bearing all the responsibility through property taxes.

See Goble, page 5A

No Greater Love

Dear Editor,

What comes to mind when you think of the word "LOVE"? I for one think of tenderness, caring, sharing, giving, compassion and commitment. There are many other words that you as well could add to the list. "LOVE" has a way of saying how one feels about another person. "LOVE" reflects feelings of wanting to be with another to enjoy each other's companionship. "LOVE" means sharing all you have with your loved ones and sharing with others who are in need. "LOVE" has a way of expressing itself with a spirit of joy and peace, and it also brings out the good in us all if used with a sincere heart of compassion.

When I think of "LOVE" I often ponder the words: No Greater "LOVE" has one who lays down His life for another. Jesus Christ showed His "LOVE" by coming down to a sinful world that did not receive Him with open arms, but rejected Him, beat Him, scorned and spit on Him and put a crown of thorns upon His head

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Letters to the Editor

Vote YES on ESPLOST

Dear Editor,

Tuesday, May 24, 2022, will bring another reckoning of ideals and values in a growing Union County.

There is a quote attributed to Ronald Reagan's "A Time for Choosing" speech given in 1964. It is a paraphrase that goes like this: "There are no easy answers, but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right."

Union County is facing a question on the May 24, 2022, ballot that requires a simple answer. Will we continue the current E-SPLOST supporting our school system?

Union County is growing by leaps and bounds. My family moved here from Atlanta almost 47 years ago when I was 4 and my brother was 6. Our family was not unlike the families that are moving here today desiring a better quality of life and an excellent school system.

Whether we like it or not, this growth places a strain on our existing educational infrastructure, just as it does in other counties across our great state and nation.

Certainly, we can all agree that allowing our school system to break under the strain of extraordinary growth is untenable. We know the State of Georgia only funds for the present, not the future.

Therefore, State funding is too little too late when it comes to planning and paying for the burden growth places on our schools. We cannot let our school system, and ultimately our children suffer due to a lack of resources, as we all benefit living in a well-educated community. So, what are we going to do?

Revenue needed to fund growth for our school system can only be raised one of two ways: (1) an increase in property taxes or (2) the continued collection of a 1% sales tax to support education. No one likes taxes. No one likes an increase in taxes.

Luckily, we get to decide whether we citizens of Union County want to be solely responsible for funding the growth of our school system, OR whether we would like to share that financial burden with everyone that spends a dollar in our beautiful county.

Are we going to share the financial load of providing a quality school system with tourists, or are we going to be selfish and shoulder that weight all on our own?

We will get to pick our poison on May 24, 2022. The answer is not easy, but it is simple - VOTE YES to CONTINUE the ESPLOST!

Beth Hand
UCHS Class of '89

The Great Ones

I have heard them called the "Greatest Generation," referring to their many contributions to our society. They brought our country victory in World War II; they led our country through the space race and helped mankind defeat polio. I think it can be argued that the greatest generation experienced the most intensive gathering and storing of knowledge of any generation. In a matter of 20 years, the lives of the mountain people improved beyond measure, but, not without some humorous events. Here are some examples.

Columbus Cummings was born in 1915, and his father, Lon, was still using horses and mules for transportation as well as field work. When Papa was only 7 or 8, Lon allowed him to travel to the big metropolis of Phil Campbell. Papa was excited because he'd never been to a town and this one had a gin, a dry goods store, a general store and a post office. Papa told me the town also had a railroad depot.

Papa said, "My Papa pulled the wagon into the line at the gin to wait for our cotton to be unloaded." They stepped down from the wagon before daylight and began talking with all the other farmers. All at once Papa heard a hissing noise coming from one kind of big critter. It was sitting next to a building called a "Railroad Depot."

Papa began to describe to me the thing at which he was looking. "It was long and appeared to be sitting on two pieces of steel. Steam was rising from underneath the thing. Then it opened its eye. This eye was bright like a light and the thing was breathing out black smoke from the top of its head. All the hissing and growling it was making began to make the horses nervous, so my Papa grabbed the reins and held tight. Then the thing let out a shrill scream which sounded like a whistle."

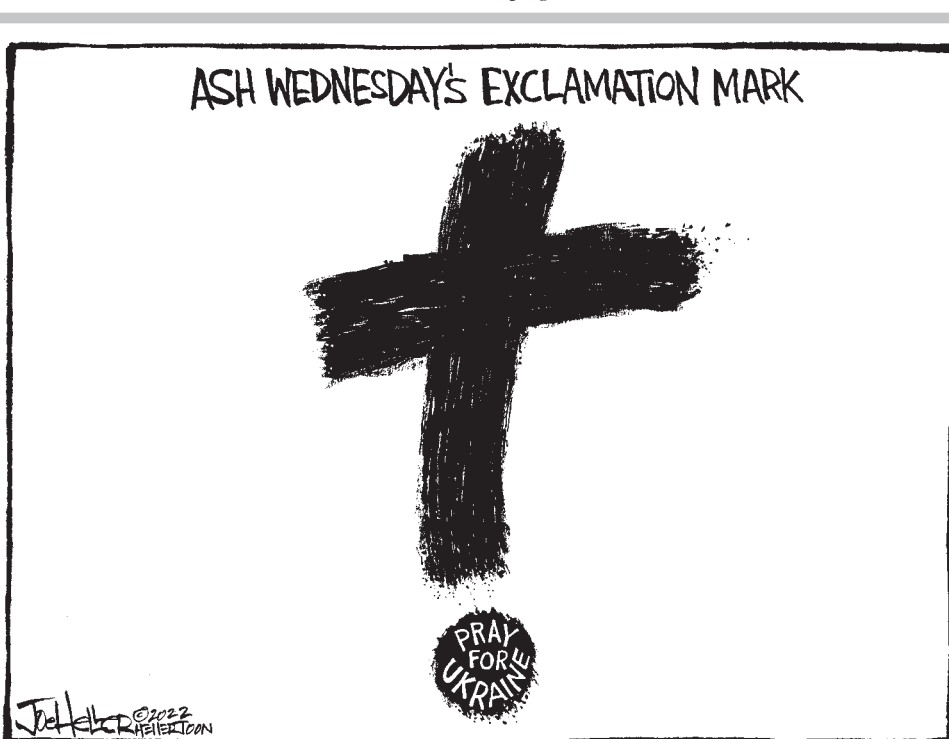
He had heard his Uncles talk of "boogers," and he felt this one was the biggest booger he could imagine. He told me he was holding on to his Daddy's legs as tight as he could when the monster began moving and traveled down those two pieces of steel toward Hackleburgh. Papa asked his father, "What kind of one-eyed monster was that?" Papa's first encounter with a train was quite the experience for a lad of 7 years.

When my Dad, Paul, was 12, Papa moved the family up north to Chicago to hopefully find an easier life than that on the farm in Alabama. The family had never experienced indoor plumbing, and the only toilet paper any of them had ever experienced was from a Sears and Roebuck Catalog. They caught a train in Haleyville and

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

It's about this time every year that many people start think of Spring. We have those days that the temperatures reach the 70s and we begin noticing many of the trees start blooming. This past weekend we celebrated the Annual Thru Hikers Kickoff at Mountain Crossing, and Vogel State Park is preparing for the season. The Chamber is also looking forward to kicking off our new series, "Success in 60."

This lineup will include:
March 30, Social Media - Facebook, Instagram & Advertising
April 27, Google My Business
June 15, Social Media - Creating video & TikTok for your business

Cyber Security - What I should know. These meetings will be held at 8:30 a.m. at the Community Center, and coffee and pastries will be served. Visit our website for more information and to register your business.

Have you found your gold coin yet? The
See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Avian Flu

There have been reports of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in commercial poultry operations and a backyard flock in Indiana, Kentucky, and Virginia. To this point there have been no cases reported in Georgia. However, it is prudent to talk about steps to take to protect your flock.

A point that needs to be emphasized is that Avian Influenza is not a concern to human health or food safety in Georgia. Any meat or eggs that are properly cooked are safe. Avian Influenza does not transmit efficiently to humans, making it extremely unlikely that you will get it. If you couple that with some basic biosecurity protocols, the risk of human infection is very low. In the few cases where it has been transmitted to humans those people had prolonged contact with infected birds, dead birds, or birds' feces.

Biosecurity is the key to protecting your flock of chickens. In the interest of biosecurity, the Georgia Department of Agriculture has suspended all poultry exhibitions, shows, sales, swaps, and meets in Georgia until further notice. This is to keep birds from different flocks from mingling together and spreading disease. Poultry is a \$22.9 billion industry in Georgia, so it is very important that it is kept running.

Avian Flu is transmitted by migratory waterfowl. Typically, it does not make the waterfowl sick, but they will spread it. Some good biosecurity steps to take for the backyard flock are to cover your coops and runs. This will reduce the likelihood of waterfowl infecting your poultry. Also wear shoes that are dedicated to use around chickens. Shoes can carry the pathogen around, so not mixing these will help. Use a dry or liquid footbath to clean shoes before entry. Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after entering the coop. Lock birds in the run and coop to preventing mingling with other birds. Change out the food and water daily. If you have birdhouses, feeders, or baths remove these as they attract other birds. Clean and disinfect equipment that has come into contact with the birds or their droppings. And finally, avoid taking your birds to places that are trafficked by other birds such as the vet office or feed stores.

Avian flu can infect poultry which includes chickens, turkeys, and quail. The symptoms to be on the lookout for in the backyard flock are sudden death without clinical signs, coughing, nasal discharge, watery or green diarrhea, swelling around the head or neck, lethargy, and purple discoloration of wattles, combs

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on the Nottely.

Q. I've seen a Grist Mill. Sometimes the wheel moves and sometimes it doesn't. What is the story behind this unique building?

A. According to records, the original Old Tate Gristmill was built by Andrew Jackson Hughes in the late 1800's. It changed hands several times, and the mill was operated by several different families. It was last owned as an operating gristmill by the Ocean Tate family until the mid-1960's. The two-story mill was powered by a 14 ft. overshot wheel. The lower level held the corn shelling machine and the mills. The upper level held hoppers for the grains and a bolt to sift wheat and rye. The mill was in operation for possibly 100 years according to the families who used it to grind corn. It was dismantled in December 2008 and reconstructed in Meeks Park II. The waterwheel on the gristmill begins turning sometime in the Spring each year, and it turns until just after the Sorghum Festival. During the festival, visitors can

tour the inside of the dwelling and view the mechanisms that capture the water that make the wheel turn.

Q. What do we need to know about the dog park next to the Senior Center? Can we let our dogs run without a leash?

A. You can park in the rear Senior Center parking lot and walk your dog across the street to the dog park trails; however, dogs must be on a leash. Once inside the park, you will see a fenced-in area where you can unleash your dog – allowing him/her to run. While walking through the dog park, you might see a disc golf tournament going on as this dog park also serves as a disc golf course. We ask that all pet owners behave responsibly when it comes to pet waste and that all trails be kept clean for others to enjoy.

Visitors will find a pleasant surprise at the back of the dog park, where a dock and gazebo provide a beautiful view of kayakers making their way down the Nottely river to the mouth of Lake Nottely.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

rode it overnight to the Windy City. My Dad was so excited he couldn't sleep, and when daylight came, he woke up his younger brother Bud. The boys were looking at something they'd never seen. Dad said, "The houses were stacked on top of each other." Also, the traffic was horrendous. There were no interstates. One road had six lanes, and each was filled with bumper-to-bumper traffic. Somehow the family obtained a photograph of all that traffic and sent it home to Granny's father, Clifford.

Later, the family went home for a visit, and Clifford began quizzing his son-in-law about all that traffic. Clifford said, "Sha Coon. You gotta be smarter than all them other folks. What you'ns need to do is pull over and let them folks by. Then you can get where you need to go without all that traffic."

In my younger days as a County Agent, I had the distinct honor and pleasure of knowing a gentleman named C. R. Collins. He began his career in education during the 1930s and served as a teacher, principal and later as School Superintendent in Union County. C. R. was in the Kiwanis Club, and he served as both Deacon and Treasurer at First Baptist Church. One day after church he told me about going on a visit to see his brother, Tom, down in Macon. The following

is his story.

"Tom had recently moved to Macon, and I wrote him a letter to inform him that I would be coming to visit him. But, during the time the letter was traveling to Macon, he had moved and the Post Office could not locate him. So, my letter to Tom was never received. This resulted in our arrival in Macon and not being able to find my brother. It was late in the evening and the place where he worked was closed. So, we had to find a hotel. We checked in and went to the room just as it was getting dark.

"When we walked into the room there was a bright light burning in a little globe just above the bed. We left to get a bite to eat and upon returning to the room that light was still burning. I got ready for bed and tried to figure out how to turn the wick of that bright light down to dim it a little bit. But I couldn't find the wick. So, I stood on the bed and blew on that bright little globe for five minutes, and yet the light wouldn't go out. So, we finally went downstairs and got the hotel attendant and told him we couldn't blow out our light. He walked upstairs into the room and pulled a white string which turned out the light." Mr. C. R. had never been exposed to electrical lighting and had no idea of light bulbs. But he sure liked the brightness of that light bulb.

Habitat... continued from Page 4A

Gifts & Interiors, Teppanyaki Time, Tin Roof Creamery, Union County Historical Society.

"Share the Love" is a great event that allows us to involve the community in our mission, further proving our continued need for the support of our local businesses and community members. This event brings in a large sum of money to our cause. This year we are excited to use these donations for Helping Hands projects, and the home we are building for Brandy Snow.

We are still finishing up the final tallies from this event, but so far, we calculated a total of \$1,000 in donations! If you are a local merchant interested in being a part of the Share the Love event next year, be sure to reach out to us at 706-745-7101.

In addition, if you have been in the ReStore recently

Williams...

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and legs. For laying hens egg production will decline, and eggshells may be soft. If you start to see symptoms in 10% or more of your flock, contact the Georgia Avian Influenza hotline at 770-766-6850 or visit gapoultrylab.org/avian-influenza-hotline/. The poultry veterinarians can advise you as to the appropriate action to take. This disease can spread very rapidly, so great care must be taken to make sure that all of our poultry in Georgia stay safe.

If you would like more information about Avian Influenza contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Chamber...

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"Lucky Coin Hunt" is underway. Thank you to all our sponsors for the great prizes including a money tree from UCBI, gift cards and much more! Check out our website for a list of all of our sponsors and participating businesses so you know where to begin your hunt!

We want to congratulate the Union County High School Boys and Girls Basketball teams for a terrific season. Go Panthers!

Stay safe and continue to pray for our health care workers and those who are ill.

Life is Better in Blairsville!

Goble...

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There are not enough words to express the importance and the dire need to continue the ESPL0ST! As the old saying goes, "The proof is in the pudding." Our schools are now busting at the seams and our elementary students have outgrown their facility entirely. We must continue to use wisdom and understanding for the needs of new facilities, renovations, expansions, safety and security upgrades, and roads to overcome the traffic concerns; as well as energy efficient upgrades, infrastructure, and instructional/textbooks materials. These are not wants, but NEEDS.

A wise man once said, "Everyone can ultimately understand the 'who, what, and where,' but understanding the 'why' is always going to be the challenge." This is my effort to touch the hearts and minds of the voters of Union County and to urge all of you to vote YES for the ESPL0ST. In order to continue making our community the best it can be, we must focus our efforts in supporting our future students who will go out into the world and make our country great!

Joseph Goble

Combs...

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and hung Him on a cross in order for Him to pay a debt we could not pay to save us from our sins.

Today there is probably less "LOVE" in our society than ever before because mankind's sin has escalated to a deeper level of depravity, no sense of moral values and no sanctity of life. When one lets Satan have a toe-hold in their life, then life has no meaning to those who choose the cunning ways of the devil that will eventually lead them down a path of destruction with no hope in sight. God's "LOVE" overcomes the darkness with a glorious light that overshadows the grave and death, a light that will guide God's children into His majestic throne room of "Grace"& "LOVE." "LOVE" conquerors all if one will embrace it with all their heart and soul.

Frank F. Combs

Moore... continued from Page 4A

protruding stick that looked like it caught him on his decent. He was almost motionless, big sad eyes looking up at us while he whined. We were terrified. My husband snatched him up and carried him to the house while I was googling local vets. Knowing my dog like I do, I went to the other room and shouted "Who wants a treat?" to which he came running, full sprint, in a miraculous healing moment that must have been a divine touch. "Yup, he's fine," I contended. It wasn't until he was told he couldn't do something an hour or so later, that the limp came back and he was once again reminded of how pitiful he was.

That was just the beginning of his new life here in the mountains. He has since taken to digging small holes all over the yard in search of moles or groundhogs or whatever thing must be under there. It's a minefield for anyone taking a stroll from the house to the shed... watch yourself. It's hard for him to hide this activity from us since he comes back home with a filthy snout and a guilty swagger as he walks to the door. He gets up every morning and has an all-out barking battle with the rooster across the road. He runs the length of the porch, poking his pointy nose through the railing and telling that rooster what for! The deer that frequent our yard were initially somewhat afraid of his aggressive outbursts. He would bark from the safety of the second story porch and they would go running through the woods. Then he would turn around and look at us, feeling very satisfied, "You're welcome." They got used to him fairly quickly though, which required much more involvement on his part, and he now has to run down to chase them off. They have even gotten accustomed to that and will sort of trot off to the side a few steps, maybe just in an effort of animal solidarity, to make him feel like he's doing a good job at keeping them at bay. Keeping him in our general area has been a challenge. Not having a fence to hold him in, he certainly has explored his boundaries. In the yard one sun-

ny afternoon in the fall, playing some wiffleball, we hear a repetitive honking coming from the street, only to realize that he saw a Jeep passing by, walked into the middle of the road to greet it, and then tried to jump inside with the occupants. The house next door to us is typically used as an Airbnb, and is a little walk through the woods. On the infrequent occasion that it is occupied, Batman's curiosity gets the best of him and we often hear renters on their porch talking about "There's a little dog out here! Who's little dog is this?" Batman is definitely an overly, maybe even aggressively affectionate puppers. Our mailman loves him, which is a good thing because he greets him with unbridled excitement every day when he delivers the mail. The other delivery services, not as familiar with him, can sometimes be taken aback and we have to wrangle him. I missed that chance one time, just to find Batman inside the FedEx truck helping the driver find her packages, sniffing around and digging in like he was on payroll.

We are getting used to living here in the mountains... it's by far a happier, simpler way of life than that of the suburbs we left behind. For Batman, however, it's a whole new life of adventure. He's gone from just another neighborhood dog to a true Mountain Mutt, and there's something new on every horizon!

Fowler...

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vine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Rom. 1:20).

Indiana Jones exercised blind faith in search of the cup that gives eternal life. That plot line appeals because eternity is set into the human heart (Ecc. 3:11). In the real world, to possess eternal life is to believe in a real Jesus who lived, died, and lives again. The evidence you can see is the foundation of your faith. Faith is not a blind leap into darkness, it's a step into the light.