

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Distracted Drivers - Cell Phones

Over the last couple of weeks, there have been several incidents where I have met an on-coming car in my lane of traffic. I have had to move over to avoid some of them. The reason – the other driver was using their cell phone. The invention of the cell phone will go down in history as one of the greatest technological advancements. However, if you mix cell phones with driving, it can be deadly. Cell phones are distracting and have become one of the main reasons of accidents.

Drivers can be distracted by cell phones in several ways. The main distractions are visual, manual, and cognitive. A driver may be texting, emailing, or even browsing the internet while driving. This divides their time between watching the road and looking at their phone. Not paying attention to the road can cause drivers to enter the on-coming lane or not see an obstacle in their path. This can happen very quickly. If you are traveling at 65 MPH, you are moving approximately 100 feet per second. A lot can happen during that quick second to look at your phone.

Another distraction is manual. Cell phone use can be a manual distraction by using one hand to hold the phone while you only have one hand to drive the car. Dropping your phone or just trying to find it can also distract. Hands free devices help but not in all cases.

Texting is the most dangerous manual distraction. It involves holding the phone and looking at the phone. How dangerous is texting and driving? An article by Jacob Masters, of the Brain Injury Society compares texting and driving to drinking and driving. The article states that, "Drivers who are texting while behind the wheel have a 23% higher chance of causing a crash. That is equivalent to drinking four beers and then getting behind the wheel." Not only is texting and driving dangerous but it is against the law. It is unlawful for a person to use a wireless telecommunication device to write, send or read a text based communication.

The last distraction is cognitive. Drivers talking on a cell phone are distracted because they are concentrating on the conversation and not their driving. They are depending on another part of their brain and reflexes to look for trouble or danger. Have you ever wondered why you turn down your radio when you are lost or

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
*David Dyer*



### Change

God and His believers need to change. So say the politicians. Such hubris is not entirely theirs, as "politics is downstream of culture," per Chuck Colson.

British MP Justine Greening, in addressing education reform said, "It is important that the church, in a way, keeps up and is part of a modern country." She added, "I think people do want to see our major faiths keep up with modern attitudes." A former candidate for U.S. President said, "Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed."

Why the push to change beliefs? The proximate cause is morality. Behind that is the belief that science alone speaks truth. David Berlinski's syllogism is: "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted. If science is true, then God does not exist. Therefore if science is true, then everything is permitted." Jean-Paul Sartre concludes, "As a result man is forlorn, because neither within him or without does he find anything to cling to."

The culture has shifted, painfully, and God is in the way. It has a place for spirituality, but not the sin-savior-sanctification of Christianity. Hence revisionist movement, even within the church, to demur from truth, morality, and the nature of God as revealed in the Bible. Shall we change God or shall He change us? "He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust" (Matt. 21:44). We come to the ancient cornerstone as He is, not as we imagine He should be. It is we who need breaking.

In a world that has forgotten how to blush, God hasn't moved and He doesn't change. Truth is eternal and so is His character. "I, the Lord do not change" (Mal. 3:6). "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Is. 40:8). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not" (Matt. 24:35). Our challenge is to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed...who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness" (Jude 1:3-4). Do you notice?

Zygmunt Bauman coined the term "liquid modernity" to describe the increasing pace of societal change as people travel

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**All Things New**  
*Wayne Fowler*



### Commissioner's Questions

**Q. Why do we have to separate our #1 and #2 plastics to be recycled now?**

A. NGRMA, who organizes our recycling program, is always looking for ways to increase the money that is made by our recycling program. We have the opportunity to increase the money we are reimbursed for plastic by about three times if we can separate it instead of combining the #1 and #2 plastics.

**Q. When do we have to start separating our plastics?**

A. March 12, 2018 is our start date for beginning to separate plastics. This will be in effect at all recycling locations, including the volunteer recycling stations that are located around the county.

**Q. What is the difference between the two plastics?**

A. #1 and #2 plastics have different molecular structures once they are molded into whatever item they are going to be in their initial production process. When they are recycled they must be melted down to make new products. This melting process is where the issue of separating comes into play. Due to their different molecular structure they melt at different temperatures with #2 plastics having to reach a much higher melting temperature. If the two plastics are mixed together to be melted the #1 plastic will be completely melted and the #2 will still be in un-melted clumps. This will make the entire batch of recycled plastic useless.

**Q. How do we make sure we are separating the items correctly?**

A. #1 Plastic is usually clear or green and glossy and includes, clear and green soda bottles, cooking oil bottles, peanut butter jars, salad dressing bottles, and water bottles. #2 Plastic is usually a milky or solid color and are rigid and includes milk jugs, detergent bottles, and shampoo bottles. Most of these containers are also marked on the bottom with a 1 or 2 in order to help you identify the two different types of plastic. Now, there are also plastics that can be labeled as #4 through #7, and we CANNOT take those at all.

**Q. Does this mean we can recycle our salad containers, fruit containers, and butter tubs?**

A. We still cannot take these items even though they are

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
*Lamar Paris*



### Drug Free Mountain Life

#### How Drugs Affect The Brain

Different drugs impact the brain in different ways. Certain substances cause the brain to release chemicals, such as dopamine, which plays a role in pleasure. Other substances block the brain from receiving certain signals, essentially numbing signals like pain.

**The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.**

Especially for teens whose brains are still growing and won't be completely developed until their mid-twenties, these effects tweak the brain in unnatural ways. Over time this can profoundly and permanently alter the way your teen's brain works.

When teens experience a high from drugs, it impacts the reward and pleasure centers of the brain, which typically respond to positive life experiences and produce happiness. With prolonged drug use, the brain can come to expect

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### Letters to the Editor

#### A Radical Change

Dear Editor,  
Want to hear a true story of a friend of mine who thought he had the world by the tail. This dude was all about himself and could have cared less about anyone else, for life was his playground and the devil was his idol. The folks around him who hung out with my friend were of the same mindset, out for all the gusto that life had to offer at any price and others in the way were warned to watch their step, least they get hurt along the way. The devil had my friend just where he wanted him, right under his thumb doing his dirty work as the devil's demons laughed with glee. My friend's attitude was one of greed, lust and immorality all wrapped up in himself and no time for others in need. My friend was heading down a destructive avenue of no return and only a miracle from above could save him from a fiery hell of damnation. Was there any hope for him or would the devil have this soul for all of eternity?

Then one bright day the Lord God stepped out of eternity and put a void in my friend's heart, a void that he had never experienced before, one that drew him, like a magnet to steel and my friend knew that there was more to life, than himself. My friend started seeking out a church where the gospel of Christ was being proclaimed from the pulpit and the truth of God's Word spoke volumes to his heart and he longed for more of God's word as the days lingered on, but the devil tried as hard as he could to tell my friend that all of this was just a big fat lie and if my friend continued down this path he would be disappointed in the end, another lie that the devil plays in our mindset; but my friend had decided to follow Jesus Christ for he knew in his heart it was the right thing to do. It's been 26 years since my friend became a believer in Christ. He lost all his so called friends of the past, but found a whole boatload of folks who love the Lord with all of their heart, soul and mind.

Folks, it is a choice we have to make whether we are young at heart or feeble and old. The devil is very cunning and crafty with words of lies that will swallow you up into an eternal fire of hell, or like my friend when he felt the love of God tug at his heart, he opted to choose eternal life over death and this is my story of my friend, Frank F. Combs. Amen.

Frank F. Combs

#### We, the People

"Now more than ever before, The People are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because The People tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because The People demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature."

James Garfield, 1831-1881

20th President of the United States

Paul Little

### Letters to the Editor

#### To Commissioner Paris

Lamar,  
You know me: When I hear a rumor, I go to the source for verification.

I've heard that you're responding to requests from local churches for an amphitheater in which they could hold outdoor revivals.

I've heard that plans are in the works for just such an amphitheater at Vogel State Park.

Have you considered the issue of "separation of church and state" relative to using county tax dollars for religious purposes? Might that not be an issue?

I'm also concerned that the amphitheater would become like the horse arena, the Byron Herbert Reece Center, the Performing Arts building — all underused but still subject to publicly-financed support maintenance.

I was hoping that you could clarify the rumors.

Cordially,

George A. Mitchell

#### Reply to Mr. Mitchell

George,

An amphitheater at Meeks Park has been on the books for the past six years. It is still a project I feel is very important for Meeks Park and all of our festivals in the future. The maintenance of one is also minimal since there is no HVAC required and it is mostly a concrete structure. However, we felt we had other projects of higher priority. I have not been asked nor pressured by any church group regarding this, and certainly would not consider building such a facility in a state park. Further, it is more than likely a project for the next SPLOST. Our immediate focus will be for a double gym which we currently have funding for and it is in the planning stages.

I hope this note finds you doing well. Please let me know if I can further assist you with any answers.

Sincerely,

Lamar Paris

#### Traffic

Dear Editor,

Everyone seems to be complaining about the traffic around Blairsville, lately. It's surprising there aren't more accidents. Everything would go smoothly if everyone obeyed the traffic laws. But there is no chance when people don't use signals; don't wait for their turn to move at the all-way stops; improper u-turns; traveling thru the traffic lights on red; improper passing; slow pokes in the left hand lane cause a problem by breaking the Move Over law; and on and on.

Iris Fox

### Lou and Sam

Something within the depths of her being told her things were amiss. She and her litter mate had trailed this wise old raccoon to the Hemlock tree standing next to the limestone bluff above Turkey Creek. They found the hot track on the creek below

her master's corn patch. The raccoon was racing the dogs to the safety of a big tree. His scented track was easy to follow, really too easy and now the Black and Tan Hounds were sitting at the foot of the 500 year old Hemlock Tree. Her litter mate was tree barking at the top of his lungs and the barking made his master's son proud. Papa and his two sons had raised the pair of hounds from puppies and they were a source of pride to the Cummings family.

The young boy was proud of Sam, but, he was also concerned about Lou. She had given a locate bark letting them know the old raccoon had climbed a tree. But, unlike her brother she had not settled on the tree and had grown quiet. The puzzled youngster, Paul, asked his father, "Papa, why has Lou gone quiet? I believe something was wrong with her." His papa assured the boy his dog was okay. The middle aged man smiled as he said, "Lou is learning from that old coon. Do you remember last spring when we thought that old bandit was treed?"

Indeed, the boy remembered. The dogs had run the old coon for more than an hour and at last they treed him up the giant Hemlock on the edge of Turkey Creek. But, when the boys and their papa arrived at the tree the coon was nowhere to be found. Papa told them the old coon had taught their dogs a lesson and now for the second time this year Lou was trying to unravel the mystery of this disappearing raccoon. The dogs were well bred and intelligent. Sam was aggressive and gritty while Lou seemed more intelligent and persistent. When she found a track she never left it until the raccoon was treed. So, when she fell silent Papa and his sons listened to see what would happen.

She left her litter mate at the tree and began to circle the tree to see if the coon had tapped the tree. Sometimes when treed by baying dogs a raccoon will go up a tree and then out on a limb. At the end of the limb the coon will jump from the tree and hightail it out of the country hoping to leave the dogs far behind. She circled out to the East toward the creek and found no scent. She then came back toward the West, but, could not travel more than 10 feet from the base of the tree due to the rock face of the bluff. The dog made her way to the North a quarter of a mile away to a small break in the bluff. She went

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**Around The Farm**

*Mickey Cummings*



### RC&D

#### A Day in the Life of an RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley, Executive Director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council, runs this non-profit community service organization located in the green foothills and Blue Ridge mountains of North-east Georgia.

Working in these mountains with the residents here is the most rewarding career anywhere and my daily goal is to help the mountain folks keep their property by making it safe from wildfire. I want to do my part to help preserve these mountains where my grandfather was born in 1889 and was the first county agent in Towns County. We live on his old farm with the scenic Hiawassee River running thru the woodlands and fields exactly like it has been since he lived here. I look forward to mornings, so I can walk out of my house on the Hiawassee River and take on the daily challenge of trying to make a difference in someone's life.

For 41 years prior to working with the RC&D, I worked as a professional forester in all areas including lumber production, forest management, software development and Interim Executive Director of the Georgia Forestry Association. I work closely with county commissioners in Northeast Georgia, Georgia Forestry Commission, US Forest Service, federal, state, and local elected officials, fire departments, schools, and many community organizations. Every day finds me meeting with one of these people to discuss potential or ongoing projects. Our RC&D administers 4 wildfire, prescribed burning, and fuel reduction contracts so I am never bored or without something to do. In 2016 and 2017, my assistant Kim and I, facilitated 39 field days and events with partners across Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia.

Each day leads to something different which makes my life as the RC&D Executive Director very interesting, challenging, and rewarding. One of my most satisfying projects is installing seasonal high tunnels at middle schools giving the students the opportunity to grow food that they can eat which teaches them where food comes from and makes them appreciate how farmers feed the world.

My prized accomplishment is the development of the Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition, which is a group of 6 RC&D councils spreading the FAC message in northeast Georgia, western North Carolina, and southwestern Virginia. After a presentation in one of our North Georgia

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**RC&D Executive Director**

*Frank Riley*



**North Georgia News**  
Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Owner/Publisher

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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 \$40. 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. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

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