# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

#### Fire Prevention Week

Union County Fire Department (UCFD) is teaming up with the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA)—to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Fire Prevention Week ™ (FPW), October 9-15, 2022. This year's FPW campaign, "Fire won't wait. Plan your escape™," works to educate everyone about simple but important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe from home fires.

"Today's homes burn faster than ever. You may have as little as two minutes (or even less time) to safely escape a home fire from the time the smoke alarm sounds. Your ability to get out of a home during a fire depends on early warning from smoke alarms and advance planning," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy at NFPA.



UCFD encourages all residents to embrace the 2022 Fire Prevention Week theme. It's important for everyone to plan and practice a home fire escape plan. Everyone needs to be prepared in advance, so that they know what to do when the smoke alarm sounds. Given that every home is different, every home fire escape plan will also be different. Have a plan for everyone in the home. Children, older adults, and people with disabilities may need assistance to wake up and get out. Make sure that someone will help them!

ÛCFD wants to share these key home fire escape planning tips. Make sure your plan meets the needs of all your family members, including those with sensory or physical disabilities. Smoke alarms are essential and each home should have at least one smoke alarm. NFPA recommends that smoke alarms should be installed inside every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of your home. Everyone should know at least two ways out of every room,

if possible. Make sure all doors and windows open easily. Have an outside meeting place a safe distance from your home where everyone should meet. Practice your home fire drill at least twice a year with everyone in the household, including guests. Practice at least once during the day and at night.

Union County Fire Department will be active in a series of events, not only during Fire Prevention Week, but the month of October in support of this year's Fire Prevention Week campaign,

See Dyer, page 5A

#### On Curiosity

"The important thing is not to stop questioning," Albert Einstein said. "Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality." The reality of the natural world has fewer mysteries because of Einstein's

Einstein connected curiosity (a state of mind) and questioning (acting on that state of mind). An unasked question is an unanswered one that abandons you on the island of ignorance. That is a desolate place to be, given the mysteries of eternity, life, and reality as Einstein said.



Dr. Sy Garte, an American biochemist, is another curious scientist. Garte was raised to believe in Darwin and Marx. But as a young man, he found those philosophies contradictory. If humans are meaningless products of evolution, he wondered, how did the socialist goals of advancing human dignity make sense? If Christianity is so bad, why was the civil rights movement led

Garte pursued an academic career and became a professor. For a while, he accepted the claims of scientism, which holds that science is sufficient for any knowledge humans need. But being curious, a question began to nag him. Does science hold the keys to unlock all mysteries? The answer from quantum mechanics is that some things are unknowable. That led to other questions. Where did the universe come from? How did life begin? What does it mean to be a human being? How did humans develop an ability to create and appreciate art, poetry, music, and humor? His worldview had no satisfactory answers.

Garte tells his story in "Christianity Today" magazine. His curiosity led him to read the story of Jesus in the Bible, which he found beautiful and believable. Then this rational, sane, and well-educated man had a kind of epiphany. He had an intense vision of himself as a preacher, appealing to a large crowd and saying things he had yet to affirm or even hear before. He began to listen to what the preacher (himself) was saying. His response was emotional, and his heartfelt words flowed. "I believe, and I am saved," he said out loud. "Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ."

See Fowler, page 5A

#### **Commissioner's Questions**

Q. In a previous Q & A, you talked about the current Union County War Memorial. I visited this park and noticed a very interesting cemetery adjacent to the park. It looks pretty old. Do you know how old it is? A. That cemetery is reported to be the oldest public burial

ground in Blairsville - possibly dating back to 1835 when Blairsville was designated the county seat for the recently created Union County. The oldest marked grave is dated

1844. It is also reported that early set-

cated in this cemetery?

from Union County Commissioner Paris

tler John Butt donated the land for the cemetery, and it may have been affiliated with a nearby church. Q. How many graves are lo-

A. Approximately 59 original graves are marked in the old Blairsville cemetery. At one time, it was known that an additional 16 sites were unmarked.

Q. So, you are saying that a total of 75 people are buried at this cemetery?

A. Actually, there are an estimated 180 people buried at the old Blairsville cemetery. Ground-penetrating radar later revealed an additional 105 unmarked graves.

Q. Many of the grave markers really show their age as they are hard to read. I also see newer markers without words or any indication of who might be buried there. What are these markers? A. Once the ground penetrating radar identified other

community residents pulled together to mark those graves and to do some other maintenance to the cemetery at the same time. Q. I saw some metal signs in the shape of a cross in the ground. What do those represent?

graves, the City of Blairsville, Union County Government, and

A. The metal signs at the old Blairsville cemetery indicate graves of men who served in the civil war. There are seven (7) such signs, and they are placed in front of each grave marker. One of these soldiers died in the civil war (William D. Addington), but the rest died after the war was over.

Q. Is this cemetery available for newer burials? If so, who do I contact for additional information?

See Paris, page 5A

#### Letters to the Editor

#### **Midterm Elections**

Dear Editor.

Have you noticed how few Walker and Warnock yard signs are out in front of homes and businesses this 2022 midterm election? I think it's because we the hard working public, that play by the rules, pay our taxes, respect our laws and love our country, have to choose from two flawed candidates. I cannot vote for Raphael Warnock. He

has voted 96% +- with the Biden administration. In just 21 months, look what those poor judgments and no common sense policies have cost this country. Crazy high gas prices, high food costs, open borders, defunding the police, more crime, more debt, higher utilities costs and so

Do not let Raphael Warnock's misleading ads fool you, he will continue voting for the Biden no-common-sense policies. He will not work on the major problems (inflation, open borders, etc.) that are crushing the poor and the

Please get out and vote. Tom Dudley

#### Well, you asked.

Two people asked recently, in fact. Why am I a proud Democrat? Let me start with the first letter. Yes, I am really proud to be a Demo-The Democratic Party gets things done.

The Social Security act of 1935. A lot of people don't realize it wasn't just about paying retirement benefits to people who had worked all their lives; the first retirement benefits paid by Social Security weren't paid until the 1940s. When it was passed and became the law, what it did first was to keep women and children from starving during the Depression.

Don't get me wrong, I like my Social Security retirement benefit, but I do think it's more important to keep women and children fed and

I also am glad that the Democrats have passed Medicare. It's awfully nice not to have to worry about my health care being paid for. Democrats recently passed the Affordable Care

See Cosner, page 5A

#### Will of the People

#### Dear Editor,

There are five active lawsuits, at least, in Union County Superior Court involving various issues with transparency and governance. Why is this? Could it be that local folks are reading our Constitution whose preamble states: "We the People in order to form a more perfect Union...

have realized that it is they who must protect this Union? Benjamin Franklin said it when asked "What have you given us?" after the finish of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. His answer: "A Republic madam, if you can keep

So, is this the answer? A plea to the courts for a return to governance by the will of the People? One can only hope. One can also hope and pray that the "courts" have read our Constitution and comply with its original meaning.

Zeb Blanchard

#### **Correcting Misinformation**

#### Dear Editor,

**Kenneth West** 

I would like to correct something I read in a letter to the editor from last week.

Transgender surgeries ARE being performed on children as young as 15 years old at

Boston Children's Hospital and Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Also, a young woman in her 20s recently testified before Congress about her surgery in her teens when her breasts were removed. She has since decided she isn't transgender and is heartbroken that she will never be able to breastfeed her future children. Anne Parks

Shawn Jarrard



#### A Newcomer's Observation

With all of one week as a Blairsville resident, I noticed something peculiar about the North Georgia News editorial page, particularly, the Letters to the Editor: they don't seem to reflect the town's disposition.

In the six times we visited Blairsville during the planning and construction of our new forever home over the past year, I always picked up the latest NGN. The letters always seem to be negative, complaining or disparaging about this or that. But my interactions with the people in town — sales people, store clerks, waiters and waitresses, and our immediate neighbors have always presented an enthusiastic pride of the town. Conversations with friends who are Blairsville/Morganton/Blue Ridge natives have always been very pro-town. Rankings in

See St. Lawrence, page 5A

#### Re: "Transgender Misinformation" Dear Editor,

My letter to the editor about adolescent children having the option to choose their gender is not intended to be hateful to anyone, and I am sorry it was seen that way. It is intended to fervently make a point that adolescents, in general, are understandably confused as they mature while they desperately search for answers.

An adolescent experiencing confusion about his or her gender is vulnerable to being led (by schools, social media, corporations, and even some churches) to believe that they could have been born the wrong gender.

This is not to say that there aren't some adolescents who suffer from diagnosed gender dysphoria. Per recommendations defined

See **Ripma**, page 5A

#### The Other Side of the Story

#### Dear Editor,

Last week, a letter writer criticized the Union County Board of Elections and the Election Superintendent Libby Stevens. The writer asked the audience to be the judge, so here is the other side of the story.

In Union County we have two separate Boards that handle the complexities of elections. The Board of Registrars is located in the new courthouse and is staffed full-time. The Board of Elections is located in the old hospital/nursing home on Hunt Martin Street and is staffed only when we have work to do, especially around elections. We are as close to being a volunteer unit as one can be even if we are paid for the

Derek Richards Todd Forrest Lowell Nicholson

See Fitzgerald, page 5A

#### Bingo

As you may know, one of my best friends is Patrick. Together, we have worked on many agricultural projects for more than 30 years. Sometime around 2007 we began working together in the old Union County Canning Plant. And yes, we have hunted, fished and camped together a

iew times. In all the time we have spent together, I must say there has never been a dull moment. If you come by the Canning Plant on any given day after



-TACOS

**ICECREAM** 

COTTON CANDY

we have slowed down for the day, you can find us laughing at one of Patrick's stories, one of which left us in tears after we had processed our last jars

of the year at the Canning Plant. Some years ago, while working in his garden, Patrick watched helplessly as a dog walked in front of a passing vehicle on Skeenah Gap Road. Patrick rushed to find the dog badly injured and yet alive. He gathered the dog in his arms and placed him in the back of his truck. The dog was transported to the local vet's office where he was treated and released to the caring hands of my friend. Patrick didn't even own Bingo; however, he had a sizeable investment in the dog. Slowly, Bingo recovered and became his old self, which was to cause some major problems for Patrick.

Patrick and I met that morning as was our custom at 5 a.m. to turn everything on in preparation of opening the Canning Plant. As usual, a little after daylight, I went outside to check the propane level in the tank. After checking the propane level, I walked back to the entrance of the plant. Before walking in the door, I noticed some wires hanging from the back of Patrick's truck. He crawled under the truck and found that Bingo had chewed up the wiring. The investment in Bingo just went up again.

A short time later Patrick's mother was walking to the mailbox when she was tripped by Bingo causing her to fall to the ground. After a trip to the doctor's office, Patrick's mother was found to be OK other than a few bumps and bruises. The investment of Bingo went up again. As Bingo aged, he was prone to wander. I suppose he was looking for girlfriends. Over a period of months Patrick made numerous visits to the pound to bail Bingo out of jail. I guess we could call each of

A few years ago, right before Christmas, Bingo came up missing yet again. Patrick was told Bingo was over in Fannin County, so, he called the number provided to him. A lady answered the phone and was on her way to the pound with Bingo. She agreed to meet him at a local grocery store to return the dog to my friend. The two met, and while they were talking in the parking lot,

See Cummings, page 5A

## **Chamber of Commerce**

Those who know me know that I do not like to postpone or cancel events or even festivals, but last weekend we were forced to postpone the Blairsville BBQ Cook Off that was to be held at the Farmers Market due to Hurricane Ian's weather forecast. The good news is that we

the Cook Off for October 29th. We will have live music, the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club, the best BBQ in the

Blairsville - Union County Chamber Steve Rowe

mountain and, of course, we will be naming one restaurant the "Best BBQ in Blairsville." Don't miss the opportunity to vote for your favorite. Last year's winner, Papaw's Bac-Yard BBQ received considerable recognition from both local residents and our visiting travel writers. This award could make it a very special year for one lucky and tasty local restaurant. So come to the Farmers Market on the 29th, have a great time.

and help us name the "Best BBQ in Blairsville." We continued with the Swine & Dine BBQ Week where many were out tasting some

See Chamber, page 5A

#### Moles and Voles

Moles and voles can be very damaging to your yard. Moles can dig up long tunnels through your yard, and voles make a meal out of the plant roots. This can leave your yard with a lumpy look and wilted dying plants. The key to treating these issues is figuring out whether you have moles or voles

in your yard.

Understanding some of the differences between moles and voles is important to decide



how to treat them. Technically speaking voles are rodents, but moles are not. Moles are carnivorous animals that eat insects and grubs that they find underground. If you look at a picture of a mole they have very large front feet. They're able to use these big, meaty claws to 'swim' through the soil creating the tunnels in your yard. They are looking for insects to eat in the soil. They won't eat the roots of plants, as those aren't in their diet.

Voles are smaller in size than a mole, looking similar to a mouse. The easiest way to tell the difference between a vole and a mouse is that a mouse's tail is about the same length as its body. A vole has a much shorter tail. Voles are herbivores, meaning that they feed on plants. Bulb plants are often a particular favorite of voles. Voles have much smaller front paws than moles do. This means that voles are not nearly as adept at digging tunnels through the ground. Voles will often use tunnels that have been left behind by moles.

Because moles and voles have different diets and behavior they must be treated differently for control. There are a couple of different methods for mole control. The first one is to use a granular insecticide to get rid of all the insects and grubs in your yard. Once the food source is removed the moles will move on to find a new food source. A second way of removing moles is by placing a trap in their main tunnel. Go out into your yard and tamp down all the tunnels that you can find. Wherever the ground has popped back up the next day is the main tunnel. Repeated trapping may be necessary because a single yard could be host to several moles. Some of the grubs that moles eat, such as earthworms, are a sign of healthy soil. Moles also like moist soil because it is easier for digging. This means that if you do a good job taking care of your garden you will also inadvertently be encouraging moles to tunnel!

Voles can also be trapped. Place a mouse trap with peanut butter near an active site to catch the voles. If you are able to get rid of the moles in your yard oftentimes the voles will also leave because they can't do a good job of digging their

See Williams, page 5A

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Cummings... continued from Page 4A

a car backed up and hit Bingo and his owner. He said, "I just stood there and watched as this teenager (while talking on her phone) ran over my foot and then sped away."

Patrick soon noticed the dog had lost his name tag so he drove to the hardware store and picked up a name tag and new collar. He walked back to his truck and opened the door. I said earlier that Bingo had grown out of the playful puppy stage, but I was wrong. When the door of the truck opened the dog leapt from the truck and began playing chase with my friend in the parking lot of the hardware store.

Soon another customer noticed the commotion and tried to help catch Bingo. As the dog ran toward the man, he spread out his arms and legs and bellowed "whoa." This scared the dog, and he bolted for the highway. Bingo ran across three lanes of traffic, causing a couple of cars to skid off the road. Bingo ran toward a car lot where a family was looking at a new car. The family had left a car door open and a grandmother was sitting in the back seat with her head turned away from the open door. Bingo jumped into the back seat, and as Patrick reached the car, he found the elderly lady in a state of shock at this dog sitting in her lap. She almost fainted before Patrick could catch the dog and take him out of the car in which the lady was sitting.

#### Cosner... continued from Page 4A

Act, and if not for the Republicans, everybody in this country would already have affordable

Oops, I jumped ahead of another reason to be a proud Democrat. The 1964 Civil Rights Act. It's not perfect, but it's gone a long way to stop discrimination based on race, religion, sex or national origin. Without the Democratic Party, these core American laws would not have been passed, authored by Democrats, signed into law by Democratic Presidents and voted against by Re-

publicans. Well, I better start on the second letter. Democrats are not against fossil fuels. We understand that fossil fuels brought us to the lifestyle and to the standard of living that we have. Democrats also understand that burning them is not sustainable, so Democrats intend to transition from fossil fuels to more environmentally, healthy ways to generate energy while keeping our current standard of living. As far as decreasing America's capacity to produce oil and natural gas, Democrats haven't slowed that down. We are still the largest producer of oil and natural gas in the whole world. No one, not Saudi Arabia, no country produces more than we do. Democrats actually have moved to expand that, but we do see that we have to change our ways, we have got to cut our emissions or our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will pay a

As far as immigration goes, it is a thorny problem. It's not just a Democratic problem, Republican problem or libertarian problem. It's a problem for all of us. We are all the descendants of migrants. Our ancestors all come from somewhere else. They all came here for the same reason those people on the border want to come here - they wanted a better way of

We won't solve this problem by pointing a finger and saying, "It's your fault."

I don't know Bill Gates or George Soros, but I do know who Stacey Abrams and Raphael Warnock are. These are two people who care about working Georgians, they care about your grocery basket. They care about your children. They care about your health and want to help the people of Georgia.

Another thing Democrats aren't too big on is conspiracy theories, this one world government stuff that I've been hearing for years and years. Yeah, I just don't believe it, but like most Democrats, I believe

I almost forgot another good reason why I'm proud to be a Democrat. Franklin Roosevelt and the Democratic Party passed the 21st Amendment, so the next time you're drinking an alcoholic beverage legally in these United States, thank a Democrat; we are the ones that ended Prohibition. William Cosner

Proud Democrat

### Fitzgerald... continued from Page 4A

limited work we do. Our office is not staffed full-time.

terrible price.

Our primary jobs are to maintain the election equipment, make sure all precincts are up and running properly, train and support poll managers and workers, and to conduct logic and accuracy tests on the voting equipment. There are other duties but these are the primary ones.

As the result of an Open Records Request (ORR) for ballot images, we discovered that we were inadvertently not copying those images. It's a long story, but it was an honest mistake, and we have taken corrective action to ensure it never happens again. BUT, we do have all of the original ballots casted in all elections we have conducted for the last two years. These original ballots are under seal at the Clerk of the Court's office. Georgia's Election Code requires that "all primary and election documents on file ... shall be preserved therein for a period of at least 24 months" (O.C.G.A. 21-2-73). ALL documents pertaining to past elections are stored for 24 months at the Clerk of the Court's office, i.e., all elections so stored can be recreated if so ordered by State governing au-

The Dominion voting equipment was authorized by the Legislature, and whereas the ballot images are automatically recorded on the ballot scanner memory cards, those ballot images are not automatically downloaded into our election server. We reuse those memory cards so cannot extract a previous election's data. Going forward, we have purchased enough memory cards so that we can store each election's memory cards in our office.

thorities.

All paper ballots generated during an election (absentee, early voting, election day voting) are considered under seal and cannot be handled by anyone other than election officials who are under oath. By law, paper ballots cannot be copied to maintain the integrity of the vote.

As a point of clarification, we are given three business days from the time we receive an ORR to respond. Responding means that we have three business days to let the person know we received the request, how long it might take to fulfill the request, and the costs in-

We invite all interested Union County citizens to attend our Board meetings (time, date, and location will be on the county's website). We place an advertisement in this paper to let you know when we will conduct Logic and Accuracy testing on the voting equipment and when we will certify the vote. You can also come and observe our election night activities at the Hunt Martin location. James Fitzgerald

#### Fowler... continued from Page 4A

Today Garte works with the American Scientific Affiliation helping people who are curious about the link between science and theology.

Are you curious? Jesus offers some questions to help you along. "What do you seek?" (John 1:38). "Whom do you seek?" (John 18:7). "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29). And my favorite, "Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:26). Do you seek answers to the questions of life and eternity? I guess it depends on your cu-

### Williams... continued from Page 4A

own tunnels. If you're unsure if you have voles or moles take a slice of apple and tie a piece of string around it. Place it in the hole and let it sit for a couple of days. When you pull it back out, if the apple is gone you have voles (herbivores), if the apple is still there you have moles (carnivores).

If you have questions about vole and mole control please contact your local Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

#### Dyer... continued from Page 4A

"Fire won't wait. Plan your escape," including education for students at our local primary school and daycares.

To find out more about Fire Prevention Week please visit www.fpw.org and www. sparky.org. For more information on the UCFD Smoke Alarm Program, visit www. unioncountyga.gov/fire-depart-

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

### Ripma... continued from Page 4A

by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care V8 for Transgender Adolescents, people who meet the WPATH criteria may be eligible for genderaffirming medical and surgical treatment.

For clarity, the WPATH defines an adolescent as a child who has reached Tanner stage 2 puberty (about 12 years). This means that, under specific circumstances, a 12year-old boy or girl can qualify for medical and surgical treatments, including breast augmentation, orchiectomy, vaginoplasty, hysterectomy, phalloplasty, metoidioplasty, and facial surgery. Surgery might be a rare

occurrence for a 12-year-old, but it seems to be an option.

If an adolescent feels

### Chamber... continued from Page 4A

delicious special BBQ dishes for a chance at winning \$500. This promotion was a lot of fun, but we must thank the ones who did all the work - the restaurants. They got creative with their dishes, some dishes were more time-consuming than their regular menu items, and staff had to talk up the event and sign passports. Thanks to everyone at the restaurants for all their extra hard work to make this event happen!

Please keep the residents of Central and South Florida in your thoughts and prayers. Many have lost everything and will have a long road ahead of them to rebuild their lives. We may have evacuees visiting our area, so please do what you can to help them while they are

ville that make our community what it is and why visitors say, "Life is Better in Blairsville!"

gender confusion, one must wonder if those feelings are true gender dysphoria or part of the normal maturation pro-

Either way, gender-diversity information is widely distributed and can be interpreted by any adolescent as common, giving him or her the possible option to change their gender.

I recognize an abundance of confusion around

this subject, but I believe one thing is clear: this generation of children, one and all, is being groomed to see gender as a choice. Making the wrong

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choice can create life-long heartache and pain. I wonder if spreading

this information to the public is in the best interests of adolescent children, or in the best interests of a vocal minority? John Ripma

continued from Page 4A

longer available for new buri-

als. It was open to residents of

the city of Blairsville until all

the plots were reserved. At this

St. Lawrence...

continued from Page 4A

occasional state and national

features are always high, in a

the NGN chooses to accentuate

the negative in the letters cho-

sen for publication. Many of

the negative letters seem to be

one person's gripe, rather than a

collective concern. Is It simply

a case of too few upbeat letters

received? If so, I'd be happy to

pen some praise of Blairsville

**Your Patriot** 

Reflection

JOSHUA'S WARRIORS

**Supreme Court** 

and Christianity

Justice David J. Brewer

penned the courts' opinion in

the case The Church of The

Holy Trinity VS The United

States. While this case was

not about religion, the court

considered America's Chris-

tian identity to be a strong

support for its conclusion.

Justice Brewer wrote, as part

of a gratuitous statement,

that the United States was a

"No purpose of action against

religion can be imputed to any

legislation, state or national,

because this is a religious

people. This is historically

true. From the discovery of

this continent to the present

hour, there is a single voice

making this affirmation...

there is no dissonance in these

language pervading them all,

having one meaning; they af-

firm and reaffirm that this is a

religious nation. These are not

individual sayings, declara-

tions of private persons: they

are organic utterances; they

speak the voice of the entire

people... These, and many

other matters which might be

noticed, add a volume of unof-

ficial declarations to the mass

of organic utterances that this

clarified his position on a

"Christian nation," stating

the U.S. is "Christian" in

that many of its traditions are

rooted in Christianity, not that

Christianity should receive le-

gal privileges or is established

to the exclusion of other re-

ligions or to the exclusion of

come to the point in this

country that the voice of gov-

ernment wants us to believe

that Christianity should be

excluded from every arena of

life. We were built on a foun-

dation of Christian beliefs,

and without that continuing

foundation we will sink fur-

ther and further into the abyss

of depravity, lawlessness and

immorality. Let us stand for

presented weekly by www.

A Patriot Reflection is

Biblical values.

joshuaswarriors.org.

Unfortunately, we have

irreligion.

Justice Brewer later

is a Christian nation."

There is a universal

declarations.

Here is what he said,

"Christian Nation."

In 1892 Supreme Court

We the Leople

on a regular basis.

Gary St. Lawrence

Loving Blairsville as-is,

So, I'm wondering why

time, all plots are spoken for.

A. The cemetery is no

Paris...

positive sense.

It's the people of Blairs-