

Opinions

Memorials

I hear so much about Confederate soldiers being treasonous men, well, frankly, I just had to say something about that.

My Great-Grandfather was a sergeant in the 52 Infantry, Company C, Army of Tennessee, Confederate States of America. His name was William Rufus Duncan, and he is buried in Duncan Cemetery.

Most folks just called him W.R. Duncan, that's how he wrote his name out on the Church Rolls at Coosa United Methodist Church.

W.R. lived into his 90s, (he died in 1904) and well, not a day went by after the Civil War that he didn't remember those days, and as well he should.

He was one of 120 men from Union County that enlisted to fight in that war. He was a brave man, and he spent the last year of that war in a Union Prison Camp, having been captured at the Battle of Atlanta.

President Trump may not have liked him, because he was captured on the battlefield. He undoubtedly would not have considered him a hero, because he had been captured. The president likes the heroes that were not captured.

I considered him a hero because he fought for his beliefs. He fought for States Rights, though many may argue that that war was all about slavery. My Great-Grandfather, nor none of my family members ever owned slaves. The didn't believe in slavery.

Another reason those brave men fought, the Home Guard would have killed them and unleashed brutality on their family members had they not fought for the South.

Today, the politically correct want to punish the statues and markers erected to memorialize the men who put their lives on the line at a time when this country was divided against itself.

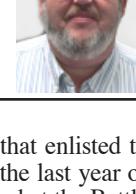
The sins of slavery haunts this nation today, and, yes, a great sin it was. It continues to haunt us at every bend in the road. However, if these statues are removed, all that will be removed will be the memory of the time our nation was torn apart.

If the statues are removed, the memory of slavery will continue to linger in our society - the Racial Divide will not be cured.

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Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



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The News

Looking for reliable national and world news these days is like trying to buy meat in a third world country. You don't know where it came from or how old it is, and sometimes it smells. The goal is apparently to sell something that could be unhealthy and even dangerous.

It's nothing new. Benjamin Franklin was a publisher, and he had to deal with this. From his autobiography of the late 1700s: "In the conduct of my newspaper, I carefully excluded all libeling and personal abuse, which is of late years become so disgraceful to our country. Now many of our printers make no scruple of gratifying the malice of individuals by false accusations of the fairest characters among ourselves, augmenting animosity even to the producing of duels. These things I mention as a caution to young printers, and that they may be encouraged not to pollute their presses and disgrace their profession by such infamous practices, as they may see by my example that such a course of conduct will not be injurious to their interests." So, back then they published false accusations that disgraced our country and produced violence? Franklin thought so. Yet he proved that a scrupulous publishing enterprise could be successful.

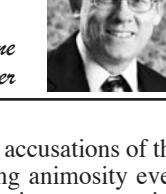
When I was a child, our family watched the evening news on TV and subscribed to the local paper. It's amazing that we survived without 24-hour cable news and internet! Look, it's important to be informed. That's part of Jesus' warning when he said, "I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mat.10:16). My point is, don't let yourself become addicted to the mental crack cocaine of the never-ending headlines screaming, "You won't believe what's happened now!" Why? Because it crowds out the good things in life, it injects you with discouragement, and it solves none of the problems it pitches at you.

You can either be off-balance and off-focus, or you can embrace "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute,

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



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Everybody has one...

Commissioner's Questions

Q. How is the economy of Union County?

A - We continue to be blessed. Our building permits for the first seven months of the year have been strong with the number of permits issued remaining steady.

In January we issued 14, February 10, March 20, April 16, May 18, June 15, and July had 10. Of these 94 homes, 16 were Spec homes and 78 were contract homes.

Annually, the totals for building permits issued are: 2014 - 87 homes built, 2015 - 129 homes built, 2016 - 154 homes built.

Our sales tax revenue (SPLOST collections) have also been steadily increasing. This allows us to be able to do so much more for the community. We recently completed a playground in Suches. Soon, we will be constructing a small kid's playground adjacent to the Adult exercise area in Meeks Park II, so when the moms and dads are doing their exercises, the small kids will have something to do. We will be adding a canopy shade system at the Farmers Market to cover the dog sitting area, and paving additional roads.

Sales Tax (SPLOST) receipts for the first six months of 2017 as compared to 2016 are below:

January thru June 2016 - \$1,528,956, January thru June 2017 - \$1,604,886.

Unemployment Rate June - 2014 - 6.1 percent
Unemployment Rate June - 2015 - 5.3 percent
Unemployment Rate June - 2016 - 4.9 percent
Unemployment Rate June - 2017 4.3 percent

Q. When will we receive our property tax bills this year?

A. According to the Tax Commissioner's office, property tax bills should be in the mail right after Labor Day, the first week in September.

Q. Will our property taxes be going up this year?

A. Not for most people. The only property tax increases would be if your property tax assessment was increased because of an improvement to your property or if your property was re-assessed.

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Solar Eclipse

I just wanted to take a little time in this week's article to thank everyone in the community for your support during the weeks leading up to the Solar Eclipse and the day of the event. We received a lot of questions during that period about what to expect and never having been through it before, we made our best estimations.

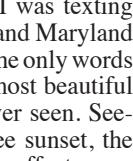
I don't know that any of us fully understood why people travelled from all over the world until we experienced it ourselves; now we get it. The day of the eclipse, I was texting my brothers and sisters in Virginia and Maryland sharing the experience with them. The only words I could use to describe it was the most beautiful natural phenomenon that I have ever seen. Seeing the sky go dark, the 360-degree sunset, the shadow bands, and of course all the effects seen around the moon itself; Baily's Beads and the Diamond Ring. One word to sum all these up, spectacular.

We did hear about the huge cloud that

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



"Hey, they're already chasing me!"

Thank You

The Great American Eclipse came and went...and it went well. That is how we at the Union County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and other public safety organizations are characterizing the event. Prior to this historic happening we had attended numerous meetings that painted a picture of either the greatest spectacle that we would ever experience or the end of the world as we knew it. We were told of gridlock traffic jams, unruly people and enough visitors to keep the public safety people running all day. The actual events of the weekend and the day of the eclipse can be described as a dream compared to the nightmare that we were expecting.

That does not mean that it was not busy. We had a significant increase in call volume every day but those calls were handled. We had several more medical calls than normal and a few major automobile accidents with significant injuries; some requiring transport by helicopter. We also had several fire related calls but nothing that had injuries or any major damage to property.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was opened the day of the eclipse to coordinate communications and responses. The EOC staff was in contact with all of the various public safety agencies and volunteers throughout the county and region. We were also able to communicate with everyone to gather information on traffic, numbers of people and possible trouble areas. We had some issues but for the most part, it went very well.

There were federal, state, and local resources available to respond to any emergency. Some of the resources were paid staff but there were many people who volunteered. One of the reasons that this event went so smoothly was due to the hard work of all the public safety personnel and volunteers.

The EMA would like to thank them all for their dedication and hard work during the event.

It was estimated that there was an influx of 10,000 to 15,000 people. Most of the numbers are estimates but there were some reliable reports of significant numbers of people in areas throughout the county.

Overall, the people of Union County and all the visitors should be thanked for the way in which they handled the increase in the number of people and traffic.

Thank you for making our job easier. It makes us proud to live in such a great community.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Willie the Billy

My granny, Glenna Mae Cummings, was quite the horse trader. She didn't trade horses, but, she traded other things. She was good at trading with the local peddler for things needed around the home. Granny carefully managed the hen house so there was always plenty of eggs with which to barter for popsicles for her sons. Granny also traded her time. She had a select group of friends she trusted and Granny would trade her time in helping them in their cotton fields which resulted in the ladies coming to her house to help in Papa's cotton. But, Granny was especially good at trading for food animals.

Granny could just look at a shoat (young feeder pig) and decide if it would yield adequate meat and lard when it was finished out at 260 pounds. She had an uncanny 6th sense that would tell her if a hog would get sick or remain healthy. She could tell by looking at a heifer whether that female would give adequate milk for her family. She could also tell if the animal would turn out to be mean or cantankerous. Granny was fond of farm animals and she never got beat in a trade. If she had been born in today's world she probably would have majored in Animal Science and maybe even practiced Veterinary Medicine.

Granny and Papa were still living at the weaning off house next to Lon Cummings when they purchased the farm I grew to love as a little boy. Each day the young family would make the trip to the newly acquired property. Clearing the property of trees was a sun-up to sundown work load and the young boys tended to get into things when their parents weren't watching them. One day before they left for the farm a peddler stopped by the house. This peddler had all kinds of things to trade like popsicles, cast iron pots and pans, tin cups and plates. But, he also had something quite exceptional. Behind the main wagon of the peddler was a smaller wagon which was pulled by a big white Billy Goat. The old goat must have weighed 300 pounds. The goat had massive horns which were very intimidating to Granny. However, her two sons were not intimidated. Upon seeing the goat her sons, Paul and Bud, ran to it and began petting and hugging the massive animal. Granny looked at the old peddler and asked him about trading for the goat and small wagon. Unknown to Granny was the fact the old man wanted to get rid of the goat because it didn't like grown men. The old man looked at Granny and smiled. He traded the goat and wagon to Granny for a couple of setting hens. Granny thought she had got the best of the old peddler. Paul and Bud thought the old goat was

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Black Walnuts

No doubt many of us are currently hearing the ominous "thuds" of black walnuts falling all around our homes and yards. Though they may seem unsightly when they start to decompose in our yards and provide hazards for our lawnmowers, these nuts can provide a tasty reward to those persistent enough to crack them.

B lack walnut trees are native to our region and have compound leaves, with many leaflets arranged on a main stem. These trees are also considered monoecious, meaning they have both male and female flowers on the same tree. Trees can begin to fruit when they are about five years old, but it often takes ten to twenty years for a tree to put out a full crop. If you have black walnut trees that are less than five years old, make sure they are watered adequately over the summer. As always, it is recommended that a soil sample be taken if the tree has had trouble bearing fruit or if you are planning on transplanting a young tree. This way you can be sure that you are giving your tree adequate nutrition when you fertilize it.

Walnuts will start to drop in late September, but we will see the height of harvest in mid-October to November. The nuts found inside the green and brown husk are highly prized, but processing these is not for the faint of heart! It takes two pounds of unshelled black walnuts to make one cup of usable nutmeat. If you do want to harvest your walnuts, it is important to remove the husk once it is ripe. To determine ripeness, press on the skin of the husk, and if your finger leaves an indentation, the nut is definitely ripe.

It is important to hull, or remove the husk, walnuts because if the husk is left on while they are cured, walnuts will become discolored and have an odd flavor. The dye produced by walnut husks stains clothes, wood, and skin, so take appropriate precautions when hulling the nuts. Applying pressure to the sides of the husk by pounding side to side with a hammer is usually sufficient to knock the husk off a fully mature walnut, but make sure to wear safety glasses. You can also soften the husks by mixing three parts nuts to one part water and a handful of gravel and stirring vigorously. Do not compost the removed husks as they produce a chemical called juglone which can be harmful to other plants.

After you have hulled the walnuts, wash the unshelled nuts. The shells also stain, so wash them outside. A garden hose and a bucket do the trick just fine, and this also helps determine which nuts are good: if they sink, keep them, and if they float, throw them away as they likely

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From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee