

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Union County Sheriff's Office the best in Georgia

Four years ago, we didn't know what to expect. Almost four years later, we wouldn't expect any less than the effort that the Union County Sheriff's Office puts in day in and day out under the direction of Sheriff Mack Mason. Sheriff Mason has turned the department into one of professionalism, a department where the men and women that make up each division proudly put on their badges and uniforms and report to work each day.

The proof is in the pudding. Sheriff Mason has brought the department into an era of fiscal responsibility. It is a department that thinks about the taxpayer, both fiscally and physically.

It is a department that gets the job done – with no excuses. After leaving the Appalachian Drug Task Force early in 2013, the Union County Sheriff's Office has taken in more than \$500,000 in seized property related to drug arrests and the operations of drug dealers.

That money has been used to send officers to training, purchase equipment that includes bulletproof vests, vehicles, weapons and otherwise saves money that came from the Sheriff's Office budget, or rather, taxpayer pockets.

By creating a Narcotics Division, money that otherwise left the county by way of 90 percent to the regional drug taskforce, stays in the county. Of the seized amount, 10 percent stays with the District Attorney's Office.

Keeping that money at home is not only smart, but, strategic.

Sheriff Mason's department has done a job that not many thought could be done. He has sent a message to drug dealers that Union County is not a place to do business. Those that continue to do so end up behind bars.

As my last column before my open heart surgery, I wanted to put in print what Sheriff Mason and his deputies have done over the last three-plus years.

The department is one of the most open in terms of sharing with the media what is happening in our community. When some-

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Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



God Is Fixing This

If the intent of the *NY Daily News* is to provoke, it succeeded with the headline "God Isn't Fixing This" in the aftermath of the recent mass shooting in San Bernardino. If that wasn't enough, they continued by calling prayer "meaningless platitudes."

After the shooting, many politicians issued calls for prayer. The *Daily News* intended to goad these politicians into passing gun control laws. In disingenuous concern to hurting people, the tabloid implied that you can't pray and act, that God either doesn't exist or is indifferent, and that it is nobler to enact gun control laws than to pray. Overreach, perhaps?

Franklin Graham jumped in with, "Prayers are not 'meaningless platitudes.' Prayer is direct access to Almighty God and is the most powerful tool a Christian has." Russell Moore labeled it the "Don't just pray there, do something" meme. In the *Washington Post*, he wrote, "For religious people, prayer is doing something. We do believe that God can intervene, to comfort the hurting and even to energize ourselves and others for right action." For sincere believers, prayer is more than just another way to express concern.

But rather than defend prayer as others have done eloquently, my interest is the difference in worldview between secularists and Christians in the background of this brouhaha. The Humanist Manifesto (1973) states that "No deity will save us; we must save ourselves." If there is no God, then prayer is just speaking to the wind, and we are left with an idealism that hopes in removing every gun, something that will never happen. But without God, we can't even agree on what's evil. That shooting wasn't evil to the terrorists that did it.

We Christians have our own idealism, that if the hearts of people are changed, gun possession is irrelevant. More to the point, if evil didn't exist, the issue wouldn't either. Yet evil does exist, and hence our prayers as Jesus taught us, "deliver us from evil." But is God somehow complicit when it happens again? Billy Graham once wrote, "God is not the cause of evil and we should therefore not blame Him for it. Man chose to defy God,"

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Explosion, Part I

Q. We heard a very large explosion last week that actually rattled our house and we would like to know what it was?

A. The past couple of weeks have been another time of learning for me. I admit that I had no idea about binary explosives or that they were on the market and had been for a few years. It seems that the large explosion heard last weekend was an exploding target. These binary explosives are classified as a firearm target, namely, a binary exploding rifle target. They are designed to explode once shot, and produce visual and sound confirmation of a hit.

Q. How did the county respond to the explosion?

A. Our Fire Department was on the scene very quickly fearing that a large fire or some other type of home explosion might have occurred. Other law enforcement followed soon after including volunteer firefighters and sheriff deputies.

Q. Have there been any instances involving binary explosives prior to the January 9th incident?

A. Apparently there was maybe a slightly smaller explosion a couple of weeks before this one, as I had already been contacted by one residence asking if anyone else had heard an explosion. At that time we had not heard of any problems nor had the Fire Department been notified. But this recent explosion, as verified in the article in this issue of the *North Georgia News*, was "The Big Bang" and it impacted a lot of people.

Q. How does this explosive product work?

A. This product is sold as a small plastic container with two packages inside. Each package contains granules, which when kept separate from each other are not volatile. The packages are opened and dumped together in the plastic container, mixed, and then the lid is replaced. It then has to be shot with a bullet traveling 2,000 feet per second or faster to reliably explode. The result is a loud bang and a large water vapor cloud.

Q. Are binary explosives legal?

A. Yes, it is legal in the raw, unmixed form. It falls under the same laws as black powder and all other explosives that are exempt for sporting use. Since it is sold as two separate powders, it can be transported and sold without the legal restrictions

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor...

Thank you

Dear Editor,

As I look back on Christmas season with The Salvation Army of Northeast Georgia, I am amazed at the generosity of our community. Each of you who provided for your neighbors blessed the recipients of your gifts more than you will ever know. Because of your financial support and the hours you gave volunteering in 2015, more than 5,000 people received assistance with rent, utilities, food, and Christmas gifts.

I want to thank especially the volunteers who rang bells at our red kettle locations this year. We are so thankful for your commitment and the selfless gift of your time. Many days were cold, but you were always there, sharing a smile and Christmas greeting to passersby. Your spirit and love made a difference in the lives of so many and will continue to do so this year as we help those who have no alternative but to

See Salvation Army, page 5A

Consider new "Letters" Policy

Dear Editor,

As a fairly recent resident of Union County I was developing respect for your newspaper and its reporting on the forward-looking efforts of the School Board, the Chamber of Commerce, our Sole Commissioner, and our government departments and agencies. The publication in the January 6th edition of the second letter from Mr. "Slap-my-head" in three weeks surprised and disappointed me. Because NGN is the only local paper, it seems to me it has an opportunity to encourage expressions of various points of view through the Letters section. A policy that no one reader's letters will be published more frequently than every month or six weeks along with a limit

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Rainfall

Dear Editor,

In the last two months of 2015 when we were seeing all that rain, weather was one of our most talked about subjects. One of my hobbies is tracking rainfall at our home in the Gumlog Valley near the intersection of Clay County, NC, Towns and Union, GA and you may be interested to know the results. My records show a total of 79.3 inches of rain in 2015. The month with least rain was May with 2.5" and the most was December with 15.5". That December total was the highest of any single month since I started recording measurements 8 years ago but the yearly amount was second to 2013. During the 8-year span that my records cover, yearly totals were as follows: 2008 (44.2"), 2009 (72.5"), 2010 (47.7"), 2011 (56.4"), 2012 (50.0"), 2013 (87.0"), 2014 (54.3") and 2015 (79.3"). That makes our yearly average for the same period 61.4". As you may know, rainfall varies greatly within our region as a result of mountain, lake and other weather-affecting influences.

Wm. Ronald Gibson

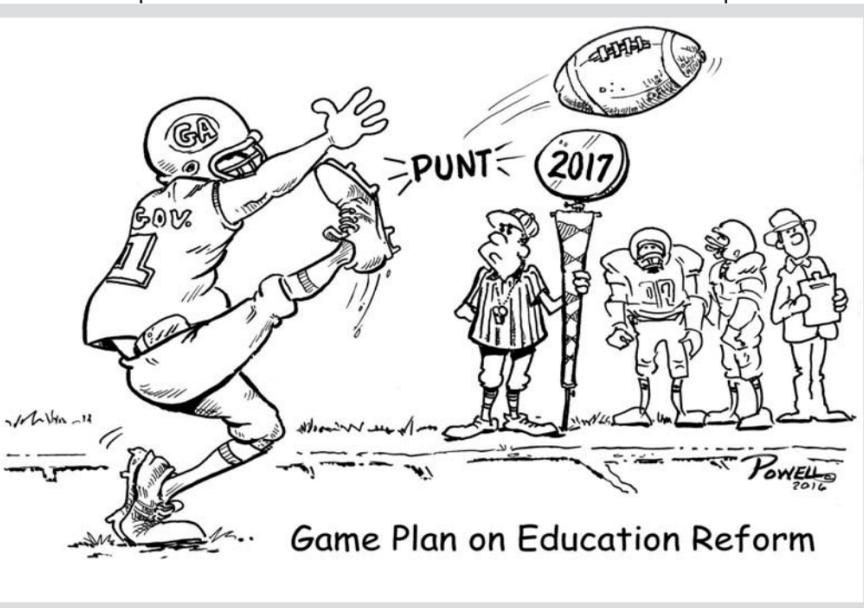
Isis or Climate Change - Which Poses the Greatest Danger?

Dear Editor,

In reality, they both pose grave dangers. For the present moment, and likely for the next several years, Isis is a severe threat. I believe our brave service men will eventually eliminate the threat of Isis, for evil will not overcome the forces of good for long. Climate change poses a great long term danger that will worsen for many generations if not dealt with properly. However, thanks partly to the Climate Change agreement of 195 nations in Paris, I believe we will also overcome that danger. It will take the collective will of America and many other nations, but I believe America will once again rise to the front and lead the world to overcome this grave danger.

Fortunately, now the answers to overcoming climate change are also the answers to leading America to a renewed economic revolution-

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The Big Bang Theory

Many of you in the Owtown area may have heard it and some of you may have felt it. What was this big bang that we heard and felt January 9? It was a binary explosive material marketed primarily for making exploding targets for firearms practice. It can also be used by individuals on private property for non-business use.

According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) "binary explosives are pre-packaged products consisting of two separate components – these components typically are not listed separately on the List of Explosive Materials and do not meet the definition of "Explosives" in 27 CFR 555.11" which states that binary explosive components are not regulated by the ATF. The ATF further explains that "when the binary components are combined, the resulting mixture is an explosive material subject to the regulatory requirements found in 27 CFR, Part 555."

A common question is how anyone can mix these components without a license. The ATF web site is clear in stating that "mixing binary components together constitutes manufacturing explosives. Persons manufacturing explosives for their own personal, non-business use only (e.g., personal target practice) are not required to have a Federal explosives license or permit. However, individuals or companies must obtain a Federal explosives manufacturing license if they intend to engage in the business of manufacturing explosives for sale or distribution, or for their own business use." Once these products are mixed, they are considered an explosive and are subject to local, state and federal regulations on transportation, sale, storage, use and who is authorized to have them in their possession.

The major concern that we have is safety. A person should do their own research on safe handling of these products and learn the applicable laws and regulations. We recommend that when using these products, follow manufacturer's instructions on the mixing and proper use. These products should be handled carefully and people should be aware of their capabilities. We want to warn people that explosive products can produce projectiles that can cause injury or death. There are several documented cases where the product was not used correctly and resulted in lives lost. Another consideration is that the loud "BANG" can disturb many people. It can also disturb pets and other farm animals so have some consideration for your neighbors. We want people to have fun and enjoy themselves but we also want to keep everyone safe while doing it.

Union County Fire Department – Our Family Protecting Your Family.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Trapptown School House

Tommy Trapp was a boy who loved life to its fullest. If something was going on around Trapptown Tommy wanted to be part of it. Most of what he got into was of his own doing. Over the years this led to a reputation for Tommy. I don't want to create a picture of Tommy being mean. Let's just say he was all boy. Tommy was in the 2nd grade when Daddy started school in 1944.

Dad was the smallest kid only in his class. Tommy was just a little bigger than Dad. So, naturally, Tommy, picked a fight with Dad. Since Tommy was bigger Dad soon found himself on the ground being beat up. All of a sudden he felt the weight of Tommy being lifted off of him.

Willie Partain who was in the 3rd grade had lifted Tommy off of Dad and told him "leave him alone". Tommy struck Willie in the nose. With one punch Willie knocked Tommy through the air. He crawled on top of Tommy and began pounding the boy. Dad felt sorry for Tommy and begged the older and bigger boy to quit. Willie looked at the little bully and said, "You ever bother Paul again and you will deal with me". Dad gained two friends that day.

Later in the year a bunch of the boys from Trapptown decided to build themselves a fort. The fort was built in a grove of big Short Leaf Pines right next to the School House and the boys used big limbs, sawmill slabs and baling wire to build the fort. After the fort was built a new kid moved into the community. He quickly established himself as the "Teacher's Pet". Wallace was smarter than everyone else and he knew it. And he quickly had a run in with Tommy. He had pulled a prank on another kid and Wallace took it upon himself to tell a teacher.

Tommy was told to cut a hickory limb for Mrs. Cummings who laid the switch to his legs. Later during recess all the boys were at the fort. Tommy told everyone, "Let's play hide and seek. Wallace you go into the fort and count to 100". While he was counting to 100 and the other boys were hiding, Tommy struck a match and set the pine fort on fire. Wallace made it out of the fort unscathed. But, he never told on Tommy again. I guess he was pretty smart after all.

Daddy always said that Yvonne "Sashayed" when she walked. She was prim and proper and she was pretty, but, her nose was stuck in the clouds. One day she wore a white dress with a big pink bow tied around it in the back. Some of the boys decided to play a prank on her. Dad was sitting behind her. In the next row across from Dad sat William Shelnett. Directly in front of Dad sat Milford Cohen. He kept Yvonne occupied while Dad and William untied her bow. And then tied the bow back around the steel frame of the chair. Those desks were heavy and screwed to the wood floor of the School House. While she was making eyes at Milford, Yvonne

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Roberta Ford – Mary Kay Consultant named Business of the Quarter

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce that Mary Kay Cosmetics – Roberta Ford has been named as our first Business of the Quarter for 2016. In order to be selected as a Business of the Quarter, the nominee must be a member of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, be actively involved in Chamber activities, have made significant contributions to the local community, and be held in the highest regard for business reputation. Roberta Ford was recognized at the January 7th Business after Hours event held at the Union County Community Center.

Roberta has been a Mary Kay consultant for 17 years achieving the Advanced Color Consultant status. She joined the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce in May of 2013. She didn't just join, she got deeply involved. Roberta has been a table sponsor at the Chamber sponsored Star Student event and has participated in the Buy Local Program every year it has been offered to the members.

Outside the Chamber, Roberta has developed a unique program entitled Adopt-a-Grandparent which distributed more than 260 gift bags to seniors in the nursing homes in both Union and Towns counties during the past Christmas season. In its 3rd year, this program has grown from humble beginnings to a very meaningful way the community can insure our nursing home residents are not forgotten. Additionally, she has

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Neither Snow Nor Rain

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

When my Sicilian grandfather dropped the vowel at the end of his name, the US postal service hired him. In the 1930s in Western NY, along the shores of Lake Erie, his new surname of Furnar could pass for a German name, making him eligible for employment.

In January of 1941, the average daily temperature was 17 degrees. That month about 27 inches of snow fell, adding to the 10 inches already on the ground since Christmas. Six days a week, my grandfather left his home in the early morning and walked a brisk twenty minutes to work. He got his large leather bag filled with letters and packages, and then walked another 45 minutes to start his route. It took a few hours to cover the route, door to door, lugging that heavy burden up the many steps of the Victorian style homes, often covered with snow and ice, to fill the mailboxes next to the front door.

Once his route was finished, he trudged back to the post office, had lunch and then the bag would be filled again. Yes, back in those days there were two mail deliveries a day to each home and business. He walked back to his route, covered the route and then headed back to the Post Office once again. He clocked out and headed home, with always one stop on his way.

My grandfather was a brilliant man who had dreamed of being a physician. Fate had a different path for him, but he never could quench his thirst for learning. Each day he stopped at the Public library where he would read national publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*. He would bring books home with him and devour a few weekly, dropping them off on his way to work in the morning in the night slot. My grandfather passed away from a stroke when I was

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Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



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