

Opinions

Everybody has one

Take a deep breath

The old saying is if you don't like Georgia's Winter Weather, wait until tomorrow.

Yes, Georgia's Winter Weather is that unpredictable. One day it's raining, the next it's snowing, the next, well, it's 70 degrees and holding.

We've entered that portion of the Winter Season when our weather forecasters appear a bit schizophrenic.

We watch and listen to the weather reports and nothing ceases to amaze us.

For instance, earlier this month, we entered a stretch of weather that fooled Mother Nature. Springlike temperatures in early January even had the old groundhog wondering if it was February.

Then came Friday, a Winter Storm Warning was upon us. On Thursday evening, almost every school system in North Georgia had already canceled Friday classes.

Friday came, the early morning hours led some to believe that the forecasters had erred again. However, by the time the morning commute arrived, folks were ready to stay home rather than brave the conditions on local roads.

Our mountain roads are just that, mountain roads. Up and down and around. For the most part, when there's ice on the road, there's hardly an easy stretch of roadway to cross.

That's why school and government leaders err on the side of caution when the weather forecasters come across as dead certain that foul weather is on its way.

On Friday, we all applauded Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe's decision to call classes off. When we're dealing with our most precious commodity, it's better to keep them at home and safe, rather than risk potential harm on an icy mountain road.

The same goes to our local governments and business leaders. We all know that it's better to give the weather forecasters the benefit of the doubt than risk serious injury to our valuable work force.

True, some communities got hit harder than others. Towns County, Young Harris and Hiwassee residents were happy to see Jack Frost take a hike after Friday's ice episodes. Law enforcement and emergency workers dealt with a dozen accidents in a three-hour stretch in Towns County on Friday.

The same held true in Rabun County, as wet roads turned into skating rinks. Even *The Weather Channel* came calling in the mountains.

It's frustrating to understand and deal with Georgia's Winter Weather. It can take its toll on individuals. It comes at a time when we're all trying to recover from bouts with flu and colds.

It can definitely leave us on edge and a bit cranky with others. For those of us who have lived here all of our lives, well, we understand it.

All this to say that we're proud of our local leaders for calling the shots that kept us safe and sound during another round of Georgia's Winter Weather.

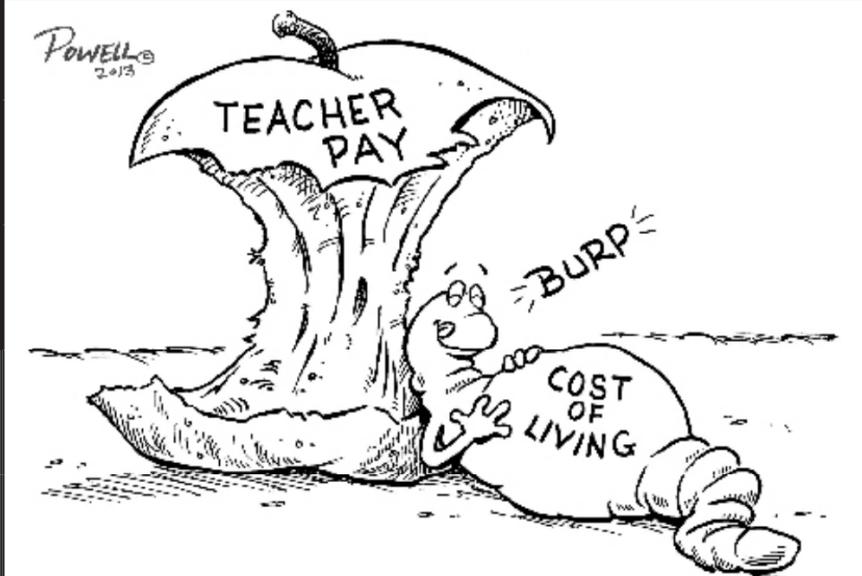
Come Tuesday, the old reliable weather forecasters were calling for 70-degree weather again. On Wednesday, temperatures are expected to dip slightly, and a deluge of rain is expected - again. Accompanying the rains, well, severe Springlike weather with tornadoes possible.

Oh well, just another week of Georgia's Winter Weather. If you don't like it, wait until tomorrow. Chances are, you'll get the weather you're wishing for.



Charles Duncan

Straight Shooting



What Day Is This?

A man and his wife sat down for their morning breakfast. The wife proceeded to ask her husband a very disturbing question. She said, "You do know what today is don't you?" Being a thoughtful, loving husband, his answer was, "Yes."

However, he had no clue as to what day it was. He thought of birthdays, anniversaries and every holiday on the calendar shot through his mind, but to no avail. Fortunately, his wife did not pursue the conversation and the husband was off the hot seat for the time being.

He rushed off to work knowing that when he returned home he had better know what today is. About 10 a.m. the wife received a love telegram from her husband. At 1 p.m. she received a dozen red roses from her husband. As the clock struck 3 a delivery truck arrived with a very expensive outfit, suit, shoes and all. When the husband arrived home he was greeted with the most excited wife you have ever seen. She said, "Honey, I have had the most wonderful Ground Hog Day of my whole life."

It pays in more ways than one to know what day today is. Like the husband, there are multitudes who have no clue about today. They live life today with a hit or miss plan. The significance of life and living seems to be a hidden mystery to them. In numerous households, both husbands and wives get up in the morning, hit the highways and fight traffic to their employment. Many of them struggle through their work without any satisfaction; dreading going home, cooking, helping children with homework, doing laundry and sometimes without any appreciation from children or spouses.

They go to bed depressed, fearing the sound of the alarm that signals the cycle to begin all over again. There are massive numbers of men and women who face each new day with the only goal to make a living rather than living a life. Someone has said that each morning puts a man on trial and each evening passes judgment. What day is today?

Today may very well be the rest of your life. Albert Schweitzer prayed this morning prayer. "Here, Lord is my life. I place it on the altar today. Use it as you will."

What is today?
"It is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24).

What is today?
"Today is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). We are to recognize this is the day the Lord has made and we resolve to be happy in it. We are to receive today the gift of salvation.

What day is today?

See Parris, page 5A

The 10 Organizational Myths of Chambers of Commerce - Part 2

Let's continue from last week with the top myths surrounding the Chamber of Commerce.

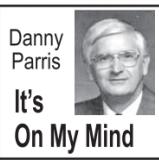
Myth 4: The Chamber's main focus is downtown businesses.

Reality: As with Myth #1 from last week, I can understand why there might be confusion on this topic. The public sees us working closely with the Downtown Development Authority and the City of Blairsville and makes an assumption that downtown is our only concern. Not true. Again, we deeply value a strong partnership with these entities and believe that in order to adequately serve our members, we must be "present at the table" when groups such as the DDA and others are meeting and making decisions for the good of the county. What happens in downtown directly impacts what happens countywide. Article after article and study after study will prove this. Therefore, it is correct to assume that we have a genuine interest in downtown, but everything we offer as a Chamber, we offer to all of our members.

Myth 5: The Chamber of Commerce is the same as the Union County Development Authority.

Reality: In Union County, we are fortunate to have two distinct organizations whose purposes, although overlapping, are separate. The Chamber, as mentioned before, is a not-for-profit, member organization whose two main umbrellas of service are assistance with business development through member programs and services and to oversee the tourism efforts of the county as a whole. The Union County Development Authority (UCDA) is a public organization of Union County who seeks to attract development that results in new job opportunities and capital investment. The UCDA works with potential business prospects who are looking to establish or relocate a business in Union County.

See Williams, page 5A



Danny Parris

It's On My Mind

John's Boys

My great-great grandfather was John Cummings. In some respects he was a good man. He was hard working and industrious. He founded a saw mill, grist mill and blacksmith shop on his farm just above Cummings Creek in north western Alabama in the 1880s.

John was 6 feet, 5 inches tall and weighed about 250 pounds. John loved to eat and he also drank heavily. Many men in the local community were afraid of John, especially one of the local moonshiners. This man had sold John some bad whiskey and John had threatened to destroy the man's still.

Another fellow in the community also had a reputation as a fighting man. Champion West may have weighed 150 pounds. But, he was not 6 feet tall. He was called Champ West because he never lost a fight. The moonshiner who had sold John the bad whiskey began carrying tales between Champ West and John Cummings.

The two men became angry with one another and soon met in the road on the way to Phil Campbell, Ala.

The Champ looked up at John sitting astride of his big white horse and said, "John Cummings, I aim to give you a whipping."

John hopped off the horse and the two men began to fight. Champ West and John Cummings fought for 20 minutes. They sat down for a few minutes to rest and then fought another 20 minutes. John looked at Champ and asked, "Have you had enough?" All 150 pounds of Champ West and the 250-pound John Cummings called it a draw. However, Champ told John "These two men knew the moonshiner had told lies about them. So, they went to his house and taught him a lesson. Over time Champ West and John Cummings became close friends.

They even partnered up to make moonshine together. The still was located next to a creek and at the bottom of a bluff. The bluff had a hole through the rock where Indians had stored grain. The hole was a tunnel that led through the rock and into a crack through which a man could climb to the top of the bluff.

The hole was covered with brush. John had an old terrier dog that would not bark. The dog would only growl deeply when a stranger approached. And the dog was always at John's side. John told his grandkids, "There were many times that old dog would growl and then me and Champ would crawl through the hole in the rock and up through the crack to the top of the bluff. We always covered the hole up with brush when we left. Then we would sit on top of the bluff to watch the revenuers tear up our still". The two men never got caught making moonshine.

John's wife was Martha Pace, who was head strong and did not approve of the alcohol.

See Cummings, page 5A

Connecting the Dots

Someone said it to me again, today. "You know everybody." Truth is, I don't. And everybody doesn't know me, though this column has not kept my identity much of a secret.

Why folks seem to think I know everybody has something to do with the fact that I seek out anybody. I believe there is a lid for every pot. You have the pot, I'll find the lid that fits just right. Better yet, I'll find you a few lids so you have options.

If you need a professional who specializes in the absurd, I have a contact person. You want to unload a tool that hasn't been of use since the Middle Ages (so antiquated, a monkey would find it insulting), I'll find you someone who wants it for their collection. You need to find a job where you only work three days a week, from midnight to 5 a.m., and never on Wednesdays, I will find you one or two leads.

It's not an innate ability, nor does it have anything to do with being connected to a huge sphere of influence. I don't network at every Chamber of Commerce and local organizational function. I stay away from those things like the plague. It isn't because I have an extraordinarily large rolodex. I have a difficult time keeping track of business cards. They are everywhere, but where I need them at the time.

It's more about connecting the dots. When I meet someone, I interview them. Some would say I interrogate them. I don't mean to be that way. I am just interested in knowing the person I'm sharing that moment in time. After I get the answers to the questions, each response gets assigned a dot somewhere in the deep recesses of my mind.

Some dots have colors, as if they are charged. These are the identifying qualities of this person. And then some dots are hollow. These are the needs I'm deciphering. Sometimes, maybe too often, they are needs that this person didn't even know they had. The next day or the next week or the next year, I col-



Mickey Cummings

Around The Farm



Lamar Paris

Q & A

Ice and rain conditions

Q. How much of a problem was the ice storm this morning.

A. As I am completing work on the questions this morning, Friday, we have closed the courthouse and sent everyone home. There have been several wrecks throughout the county and our Road Department has been out spreading gravel and salt since early this morning. We have been fortunate so far that the rain (ice) has been intermittent keeping up from a large buildup on the highways and the power lines. But sections of the road have been very slick. The temperatures are forecast to rise after noon, so hopefully we will have avoided a much larger problem than it could have been. As I turn this in to the newspaper, it is now noon and we have not had any rain or ice in the past couple of hours in Blairsville and I am very hopeful that we have dodged what could have been a very serious weather event.

Q. What can we, as citizens, do to make sure we do not get ourselves into a difficult situation during adverse rainy weather conditions as we had last week?

A. Mostly, it involves common sense. However, if you have not lived in a mountainous area before, there are certain issues you may need help in understanding. While some will think this is a dumb statement, you have to remember that water runs downhill and fast in the mountains. Often, if you were raised in a part of the country where it is relatively flat, water may just pond up during large rains and move slowly away from view through large networks of storm drains, but in the mountains it is going to flow hard and fast with large rainfall totals.

While your home located along a beautiful creek or trout stream is the envy of many people most of the year, when there is a lot of rain, you have to keep alert because your property could certainly run the danger of being flooded. When the soil is very saturated as it was this past week with the daily rainfall totals, if we received three or four inches in one day, we would have had some serious flooding. Fortunately for us, it would rain for a while and then stop. So be prepared any time the soil is saturated, especially if we have large rain totals during the night. In the past, rising storm waters during the night have caused some of the most serious problems and several water rescues have been necessary throughout the years.

See Paris, page 5A

Letters

To the Editor

Remember who you work for

Dear Editor,

I believe it is time for the workers employed by Union County to be reminded, they work for the taxpayers.

We supply your paycheck. Being a county employee gives you no right to be rude, disrespectful or arrogant.

When someone is addressing you in a polite manner and extending verbal courtesy, you should reply in the same manner. Talking over, being belligerent or replying with innuendoes, is not a proper respectful reply. Making an accusation and then refusing to hear a reasonable reply, is not very professional.

While my name may not be signed on your check, have no doubt I am one of the many in this county, that provide it for you.

Chanel Hilliard

Blairsville needs Chick-Fil-A

Dear Editor,

Do you think Blairsville should get a Chick-Fil-A?

Personally I do. One of the reasons I think Blairsville should get a Chick-Fil-A is because many people love Chick-Fil-A.

I personally like Chick-Fil-A because they have such a huge variety of foods such as the famous chicken sandwich. My all-time favorite thing to get at Chick-Fil-A is a No. 1 and an ice cream.

One of the second and most important reasons I think Blairsville should get a Chick-Fil-A, is Chick-Fil-A's Christian background. I think it is really cool that Truett Cathy tithes 90 percent and lives on 10 percent. Truett Cathy also funds Winshape programs.

The main reason I wrote this editorial is to encourage the people of Blairsville to push for a Chick-Fil-A.

I am a seventh grader at Mountain Area Christian Academy and I encourage you to vote for a Chick-Fil-A in Blairsville.

Teren P. Hooper

Print the good stuff again

Dear Editor,

Some of the changes that have recently been made to the paper are for the better. The change you've made to the Letters to the Editor is not one of them.

Your selection of letters that you print has made one of the most interesting parts of the paper into one of the most boring.

How about bringing back a little life into it? I know that people have not stopped writing interesting letters.

Clyde Woolsey

A lesson to be learned

Dear Editor,

I would like to remind Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey that Jews have been persecuted, tortured and murdered throughout their history.

After World War II and the attempted annihilation of their race by Nazi Germany, presuming Ms. Ramsey believes the Holocaust actually happened, the Jews established a homeland in 1948 and vowed "Never Again!"

They have tried to live in peace with their neighbors but their neighbors, including the Palestinians, have denied their right to exist and have attacked them over and over with vows to "Wipe them off the face of the Earth forever."

Israel defends itself as would anyone if their neighbor began shooting at them and launching missiles from his yard into theirs unprovoked.

However, it seems clear, based on her letters, that Ms. Ramsey supports the Palestinian's cause over the Israeli's and I fully support and defend her right to do so, but I must ask, as she did, where is her outrage of the Palestinian's hiding behind Mosques, children's schools and hospitals?

See Adams, page 5A

Do the math

Dear Editor,

Voters may also be mystified that President Obama, who as recently as New Year's Eve reiterated his commitment to a "balanced" approach to reducing our deficits, has signed a bill that cuts spending by \$15 billion, while boosting tax revenues by \$620 billion. That ratio of 44:1 tax hikes to spending cuts doesn't sound very balanced.

Equally puzzling, President Obama pledged to prevent a tax increase on most Americans but - surprise, surprise -- the Tax Policy Center reports that 77 percent of U.S. households will pay higher taxes this year thanks to the expiration of the two percentage-point payroll tax holiday.

Hard pressed, voters might wonder about other claims made recently by their president. For instance, he has on numerous occasions boasted that he has cut spending. And yet, for the first two months of this year, federal spending jumped a whopping 16 percent. Even adjusted for some timing issues, spending was 4 percent higher for October and November than it was last year - and

See Mitchell, page 5A

An obligation to warn others

Dear Editor,

Most Americans would prefer not to think about the many potentially dangerous individuals suffering from serious mental disorders who wander free in our society, undiagnosed, untreated and unconfined.

Almost all of those who have committed mass shootings in recent years had been diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia.

Nancy Lanza, mother of Adam Lanza (the mass shooter at the Sandy Hook Elementary School), assured friends that her son's strange behavior was "merely" due to Asperger's Syndrome.

In reality, he more than likely was also a paranoid schizophrenic.

In response to this latest tragedy, the Connecticut legislature is contemplating a stringent gun control law; while, on the other hand, doing nothing to change the state's mental health laws that make it almost impossible to get someone committed against their will. If Nancy Lanza had tried that course of action with regard to Adam, what even more dreadful revenge might he have taken in retaliation.

See Ramsey, page 5A

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