

Lance...from Page 1A

teammate on the 1955 Union County basketball team. "He played honest, he never tried to hurt anyone, but he played to win."

Lance also played in the North-South High School Basketball All-Star Game in 1955, Akins said.

"He was like a big brother to me," Akins said, choking back tears. "We lost the first game of the 1955 State Playoffs. We lost, but we represented the school for the first time at the state playoffs in Macon. That was Jack's senior year."

Union County lost to Lanier County 69-66. Lanier County, 37-0, went on to win the 1955 Class B State Basketball Championship.

The next closest team scoring-wise finished 15 points behind Lanier County.

Lance enjoyed a solid college basketball career playing for Luke Rushton at Young Harris College.

Lance and five of his descendants scored more than 1,000 career points each playing for the Panthers or Lady Panthers.

The list included Big Jack, children Kris, Kenya, Jack Jr., grandson Seth Merritt and granddaughter Becka Merritt.

Another prodigy, grandson Jake Gooch, holds the Panthers basketball record for blocked shots.

Before he passed away, Big Jack learned that the Sec-

ond Annual Glenda Gooch Foundation Tip-off Basketball Tournament would be a reality.

Glenda Gooch, of course is Jack Lance Sr.'s beloved late granddaughter.

Jack Lance Sr. wasn't just about basketball.

For years, he was one of the community's two pharmacists, practicing at Hill-Lance Drugs alongside close friend and fellow 1955 basketball teammate Charles Hill.

During his career, he tipped off numerous customers that they might have diabetes - he was never wrong.

After retirement, he stayed active in the community, often conducting diabetes clinics for senior citizens

at Wesley Mountain Village.

He served more than 26 years representing Union County on the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors. He was a board member at the time of his death.

Jack Lance Sr. was one of the charter members of the Union County Parks and Recreation Board of Directors.

He also served on the Union County Historical Society Board of Directors.

"We went to a Historical Society meeting in Habersham County just a week before his death," said Akins, president of the Union County Historical Society. "It's hard to believe Jack's gone."

Shotgun Park...from Page 1A

the property owner in the January Commission meeting.

Waiting another few days for the deal to be finalized shouldn't be an issue for the more than 60 student-athletes who participate in this 4-H program, who have patiently waited since the 1997-98 school year to have a place they can call home.

Due to the location and the layout of the land, this facil-

ity couldn't be more perfect.

This will most certainly offer the Union County 4-H kids an opportunity that most across the state could only dream of, perhaps spring boarding one of our local student-athletes into the Olympic Games sometime in the near future.

The Union County 4-H shooting teams are headed to state competition at Rock Eagle on April 4.



Travis Kerr

The Union County BB Gun Team is led by 11-year-old Travis Kerr.

Kerr took home four medals during last week's state qualifying competition.

Kerr brought home two first place medals, a second place medal and a third place medal.

Good luck at state Union County shooters!

Master Gardener Appreciation Day celebrated

March 15 has been identified by the State of Georgia as the official day of recognition for Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, a program now in its 35th year.

Likewise, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris recognized the date in Union County.

In 1914, 100 years ago, a significant piece of legislation, the Smith-Lever Act was passed.

U.S. Sen. Hoke Smith of Georgia was a co-author of the bill which created the Cooperative Extension Service as a link between the United States Department of Agriculture and the land grant colleges, to fulfill the mandate of sharing useful and practical information on agriculture and home economics.

In 1979, the Georgia Master Gardener program was established by the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Services to train volunteers to expand the outreach of the County Agents.

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers provide unbiased and up-to-date horticultural information to the community.

The program has been so successful it is found in every state and several provinces in Canada.

The Towns/Union Master Gardener's Association has provided a total of 2,820 volunteer hours in 2013.

Based on an hourly rate (at a dollar value provided by the University of Geor-



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris presents a Master Gardeners' proclamation to Union County Master Gardener Jo Ann Allen at last week's commission meeting. Photo/Charles Duncan

gia formula) for the type of work done, this equates to \$55,695.00.

The Master Gardeners fulfill their mission through a variety of programs and projects.

Some of the more visible projects include the Cottage Food Bank Garden in Blairsville, the Gold Medal Garden, "Ask a Master Gardener" booth each Saturday at the Union County Farmers Market, the new Memory Garden at Union General Hospital, Towns County Farmers Market, the Pioneer Cabin garden/grounds at Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, Hiawassee Square, and GMREC activities/committees.

There are many more projects, plus a waiting list of requests for assistance.

While the numbers are small, 21 active volunteers in the two counties, this is a committed group of women and men who are making a difference.

There is a training class in progress now that will provide an additional 23 Master Gardener trainees to support this work.

We hope you took a minute on Master Gardener Appreciation Day, and thanked a Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for their contribution to your community.

Riley talks IAFC and Fire Adapted Communities

This week, I am representing the Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D Council and our Towns County Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) project at the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) conference in Reno, NV.

Our highly successful FAC program has attracted national attention from the agencies and organizations that promote and fund the FAC concept and they asked me to present our program at their WUI conference and the international audience was very interested in what we are doing here in Northeast Georgia to educate our citizens about the threats of wildfire. The opening session of the conference featured our Public Service Announcement that the IAFC filmed here in Towns County back in December. The fact is that we can no longer assume that a wildfire won't happen here in our backyard... the tragic fire in Yarnell, AZ last year that killed the 19 Hotshot Firefighters was the first wildfire in that community in 45 years.

Homes near natural areas, the wildland/urban interface (WUI), are beautiful places to live. These pristine environments add to the quality of life of residents and are valued by community leaders seeking to develop new areas of opportunity and local tax revenue, but these areas are not without risk. Fires are a part of the natural ecology, living adjacent to the wilderness means living with a constant threat of fires.

Fire, by nature, is an unpredictable concept of fire-adapted communities (FACs) holds that, with proper community-wide preparation, human populations and infrastructure can

withstand the devastating effects of a wildland fire, reducing loss of life and property. This goal depends on strong and collaborative partnerships between agencies and the public at the State, Federal, and local levels, with each accepting responsibility for their part.

The "2005 Quadrennial Fire and Fuel Review" promoted a strategy of fostering FACs rather than escalating protection of communities at risk in the WUI. It highlighted that the ultimate objective is to enable communities to create their own fire-safe environment, lessening the need for Federal protection, which will free up Federal dollars for ecological restoration and reducing risk to residents and firefighters alike.

The subsequent "Quadrennial Fire Review 2009" took the concept further, explaining that implementation should include strategies for increasing knowledge and commitment that will build a sense of responsibility among landowners, homeowners, the insurance industry, fire districts, local governments, and other key players in WUI communities for wildland fire prevention and mitigation.

Supported by an integrated fuels management portfolio, these strategies include building community defensible space and fuel reduction zones, and recalibrating public expectations in the FAC area. Yet, the concept is not just illustrated in defensible space techniques and preparedness. It seeks to explain how a community can coexist with wildland fire and, ultimately, reduce large fire threats and eliminate the need for a large and expensive fire-suppression response. This is achieved through the



understanding of the role of fire on the traditional environment that a community is now located in and the subsequent impacts of land development and introductions of nonindigenous vegetation.

The commonly held definition of FAC states that: A FAC is a community of informed and prepared citizens collaboratively taking action to safely coexist with wildland fire threat. A FAC has, or is striving to achieve, the following characteristics: It exists within or adjacent to a fire-adapted ecosystem. Adequate local fire suppression capacity is available to meet most community protection needs. Structures and landscaping are designed, constructed, retrofitted, and maintained in a manner that is ignition resistant. Local codes (building, planning, zoning, and fire prevention codes) that require ignition resistant home design and building materials are adopted and enforced. Fuel treatments are properly spaced and sequenced, and are maintained across the landscape. A community wildland fire protection plan is developed and implemented. The community has a defined geographic boundary.

For more information on FAC, IAFC, and RC&D contact Frank Riley, Executive Director, Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council at: frank.ccrd@gmail.com.