

Opinions

Everybody has one

Missing Momma

As Mother's Day approached last week, I sat and wondered just how much of an impact that my mother made in my life.

First, I must admit, I've never called my Momma, "mother."

I remember my Granny Potts telling me at a young age that the first word I ever spoke was "Momma."

My Momma was my world; I was her baby, the youngest of six children. She was so protective of me; I remember having to stay on the front porch when the rest of the kids were out playing in the front yard.

The first time I remember getting the opportunity to get off the front porch, I ran into my sister while she was riding a bicycle. My face was bloodied, my mouth was sore. I didn't object to not being allowed to get off the front porch for a long time afterward.

I grew older, started to school, and yes, I was allowed to get off the front porch. More importantly, I grew closer to my Momma. She worked with me on my homework. In her younger days, she was a school teacher in a one-room school house in the Coosa District.

She taught me right from wrong, not to steal, to take responsibility for my actions and to always be polite and respectful of my elders. I remember a hickory whipping or two, but my Momma always reasoned with me and gave me an explanation before the punishment came down.

Most of all, she taught me to respect others and to be sensitive of their feelings.

I couldn't have picked a career that contradicted with her philosophy more than becoming a journalist. Nevertheless, I incorporated her philosophy into my line of work.

Thus, the reporter/editor that you see today is a direct reflection of my Momma's influence in my life.

Only the natives of Union County know that I barely had my Momma for 18 years of my life.

A disease called diabetes took its toll on her; she died at the age of 57.

In those 18 years, she taught me that writing was the best way to make a living. She was a teacher, she was a writer. In her younger days, she also served as a reporter for the North Georgia News for publisher Harold West.

Mothers have a great influence in the lives of their children. So do fathers. However, there's a bond between mother and child that seemingly cannot be broken.

Before I get a Letter to the Editor telling me that I'm wrong about this, as I did this week about my beliefs about the power of

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Charles Duncan
Straight Shooting



"Who would have thought moms actually like jam sandwiches?"

Clifford and the Deputy

My great grandfather on my Daddy's side of the family was originally from Dawson County. Their farm was located in the Shoal Creek District. Clifford's father, Daniel, and Clifford's grandfather, Daniel, fought for the South during the "War Between the States." As a young man Clifford migrated down to the Alpharetta area. Unlike today Alpharetta was a small place. However, there was more for a young man in Alpharetta than in Dawsonville.

Clifford's vice was drinking and this vice soon landed him in trouble. We don't know the whole story, but I know it involved drinking and a woman. Clifford and another man had an altercation over a woman after consuming too much store bought liquor. Clifford was never a big man. But, everyone knew you didn't want to cross him. Anyway, Clifford beat the other man rather severely and thought he had killed him. So, Clifford left Georgia sometime around 1900 and migrated to Phil Campbell, Alabama. Here in Alabama Clifford met his wife and raised his family. You would think Clifford would have learned his lesson about too much drinking. But, he had a few problems later in life as well.

Let's move forward in time 50 years. By this time Clifford was in his 70's and he loved being around his grandsons. Each Saturday my Dad would go to Clifford's house and take him to the Barber Shop. After a haircut and catching up on the latest news Clifford and his grandson would go to the diner for an early lunch and they would end their trip to town by playing a few rounds of pool at the Phil Campbell Pool Hall. The grandfather and grandson would usually meet the Chief of Police on their Saturday excursion. Chief Looney and Clifford were great friends and each Saturday the Chief would bring Clifford a flask of his latest moonshine bust.

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Mickey Cummings
Around The Farm

Talking Walls

One of the Seven Wonders of the World is "The Great Wall of China."

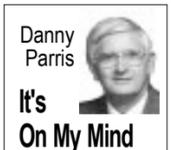
It was built over 2,500 years ago and is the longest human-made architectural structure known to man. The Great Wall of China is the only man-made object that can be seen with the naked eye from outer space. It is constructed of masonry, rocks and packed earth. Originally, it was over 5,000 km long and its thickness ranged from 15 to 30 feet and up to 25 feet tall.

The Great Wall was enlarged to 4,000 miles during the Ming Dynasty. I have never visited the Great Wall but always found it to be an interesting piece of history. In fact, there are many stories about walls that are very fascinating. One of my favorite Bible stories is recorded in Joshua, chapter six. Jericho was shut up, but God had told Joshua that the city belonged to the people of Israel. All they had to do was march around the city for seven days. They marched around Jericho once a day for six days. On the seventh day they marched around the city seven times. On the seventh time the priests blew the trumpets and the people shouted and the walls fell flat. It was a miracle of God.

The walls of Jericho have a great story to tell. Right now in America, about the only wall that most folks are interested in is Wall Street. It tells a story every day about our economy. Some days it makes people happy, on other days it makes investors very sad. Wall Street is important to most of us as far as investments and retirements are concerned.

We certainly want the market to do well. However, Wall Street is not to dictate life and living for Americans, or the rest of the world. For months many people have felt that their backs were against a brick wall or a blank wall. In fact, many of us have been like Belshazzar (Daniel 5:5); we have seen the writing on the

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Danny Parris
It's On My Mind

Economic Development

Q. Does having a low county debt help our economic development prospects?

A. It certainly does and is one of several factors important to those looking for new retail or commercial/industrial locations. Also, having one of the lowest property tax rates, along with top notch health care and educational facilities/personnel, public safety personnel and a qualified work force, all are huge positives for our county.

Q. Are there other county features that make us particularly attractive for new business?

A. Absolutely. Attracting industry and business is all about being business friendly and having a county with the highest quality of life. When you add in the tremendous assets of North Georgia Technical College and nearby Young Harris College, our new library, remodeled civic center, horse arena, farmers market, new canning plant, Union County Community Center, and one of the best recreation facilities anywhere in Meeks Park, we have a solid package hard for almost any rural county to compete with. To put all of this together requires an investment in an active Economic Development office. With Mitch Griggs as our Director, supported by the active board members, Union County is poised to take advantage of the growing economy and we have only positive things to look forward to in our county in the years to come.

Q. In last weeks Q & A you mentioned that the new Union County Community Center would be paid for with funds from our next SPLOST. Should that SPLOST IV be unsuccessful how will the Center be paid for?

A. Any bond indebtedness is always backed up by property taxes. Should a future SPLOST fail, the general county budget would be utilized to pay the debt. In fact, should the current economic conditions continue to improve at their current rate, we should be able to make a significant payment on the bond with the current SPLOST.

It is very rare that a SPLOST ever fails especially when the government has a good reputation of providing the projects that were sold to the public. With even very moderate growth over the next few years, paying the debt will not be a problem with or without SPLOST.

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Lamar Paris
Q & A

Are you listening?

Have you ever heard the saying, "It's not what you say that counts, it's what they hear?"

A vital part of the communication process is listening. In business, proper listening skills can mean increased revenue and loyal customers. Business owners, managers, and employees must encourage their customers to speak and then pay close attention to what they are saying. Today, I want to discuss a few ideas central to getting customer feedback.

Selling is actually the art of listening to your customers' needs and communicating to them how your product or service will fill that need according to JoJo Tabares who has a degree in Speech Communication. Her Website is www.ArtOfEloquence.com. One of the best ways to understand your customers is to take a survey. A standard business survey to find customer feedback includes the following questions: How was your overall experience? What was the purpose of your visit? Were you able to complete your visit as you intended? If yes, what was the most positive element of your visit? If no, why? The answers should tell you about your customer's regard to your business modus operandi. It will help you understand what your customers are thinking and help to pinpoint what is keeping a customer from making purchases from your business. It may also help guide the future direction of your business and the products and services that you should be offering.

"Listen to your customer" - it's one of the most important things you can do to grow your business according to Caterpillar Chairman and CEO Doug Oberhelman. "Since time is money, we should exceed high expectations." In the equipment business, downtime is critical with schedules, employee time and business timelines. Often with a business that depends on another business to operate specialty equipment, time and customer service lets the customer know who will back them up when schedules are tight. Equipment downtime can make the difference according to Will Nelson of Nelson Tractor in Blairsville. Will said, "When hay is on the ground, rain is in the forecast, and your baler is in need of repair, time is of the essence. Service lead times and emergency parts orders are sometimes unavoidable; miscommunication on the other hand is avoidable. The key is you have to listen; you have

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Joe Garner
BUCCC
Blairsville - Union County Chamber of Commerce

Economy

As our nation continues to struggle through the current economic crisis it is important to stay focused on the recovery aspects. I have outlined a five-point plan for boosting our economy and getting our nation's debt under control to save our country for future generations.

1. We must make a budget and cut spending. Our government must do what every American family has had to do: sit around the kitchen table, reprioritize expenditures and get a budget in line with expenditures. I believe that cutting federal spending is the number one thing we can do to help put expenses in line. We can find those savings in government through attrition, by slowing down government growth, by getting more out of less, and by finding new ways to be efficient.

2. I have tried to be a good steward of federal tax dollars throughout my career by running my Senate office with the same efficiency with which I ran my successful real estate business. I have returned \$3.1 million of my office budget to the U.S. government in my 13 years in federal office.

3. We must change the formula for Social Security. The United States has an historic precedent to follow on this matter. President Reagan and Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill agreed to a formula change in 1983, moving the age of eligibility to receive Social Security as life-expectancy grows. With advances in medicine and science, we are able to live and work longer. Adjusting the age of eligibility for Social Security benefits, except for those who are currently receiving it, would help secure funding for future generations.

4. We must overhaul Medicare. Depending on what numbers are used, Medicare will be depleted sometime between 2017 and 2024. I am looking at a variety of different plans and I feel that means-testing will likely have to be a part of the eventual solution.

5. We must reform the tax code. I believe that a tax based on consumption makes more sense than the current formula of taxing production. In the meantime, I support closing loopholes in the current code.

The Obama administration has greatly reduced the nation's productivity by over-regulating business. I understand and support mitigating risk; however, you cannot remove all risk in a free-enterprise system. We are handicapping ourselves by regulating ourselves right out of business and jobs.



Johnny Isakson
United States Senator
On the Hill

Letters

To the Editor

A second opinion

Dear Editor:

Not wishing to take anything away from your harrowing near-death experience, the recovery from which you attributed to intercessory prayer (editorial, May 9), those of us who are non-believers would ask if there was another patient in that same hospital, also at death's door, who was also loved and the recipient of fervent pray; yet, was not saved. All things being equal: one lived and one died. The religious, of course, would say: "It was God's will."

There have been aircraft disasters where one survived, while hundreds perished. Are we to assume that God found only one worthy of saving? Or, was it merely fate, karma or just plain luck that the survivor happened to be in the safest spot in the plane? In any event, we would be told: "It's a (heavenly) miracle!"

Each of us lives every day never knowing what will befall us; always hoping for the best, but probably should be expecting the worst - unpredictable randomness being one of the rules of the universe.

Rather than the intervention of God in a patient's recovery from near death, a logical explanation would be: excellent medical care, the age and overall medical condition of the patient, his or her medical history, hereditary factors and, perhaps most importantly, the patient's will to live.

If there are any unbiased and unemotional empirical statistics on the subject matter, I rather suspect that more extremely ill patients recover without the benefit of intercessory prayer than with it.

Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

Enough is Enough

Dear Editor,

I am neither Republican nor Democrat. I am independent and vote for the person not the party, but I will always vote NO on any and all tax issues. I am retired living on a fixed income and when I add up all the taxes I pay, Income tax, Sales tax, Property tax, Highway Fuel tax, ad valorem tax etc, etc, it comes to almost 50 percent of my total income.

For all those that support more and higher taxes to fix all of our governments' ills, I have to ask how much is enough and when will they cry foul?

John Q. Adams III

Love the Website

Dear Editor,

I was very disappointed when I could not find the NGN paper on the Internet. With all the upheaval of Norm's departure, I was afraid that you decided to cancel the paper online. I Googled NGN and found your new site. I am very happy with how you have revamped the web site. Excellent with the additions of the Towns County Herald and an archive section. Kudos to Janice Boling.

I have a place in the Track Rock area and get up as much as possible. I follow the Blairsville Topix Forum (no longer a good thing for Blairsville) and respond on occasion. Anyway, I have not had a subscription before but am considering getting one in the near future.

Tony Yebba

Love the Editor

Dear Editor,

CONGRATULATIONS and WELCOME!! I do have to agree that we seem to have picked a certified winner for the new "and improved" Editor. I must say that I have really enjoyed reading the paper now so much more than ever, since a lot of the "unnecessary" things have been removed. It has just needed a "clean-up" for years. Once again I welcome you, and am looking forward to the paper now more than ever.

Mrs. D. Barnes

Proud of VA Clinic

Dear Editor,

I want to share with everyone the experience I had this week at our local VA Clinic. It was GREAT! I spoke with two receptionists, a lab tech., an X-ray tech., and Dr. Tatum. Everyone was professional, polite and courteous. We veterans are so fortunate to have this facility right here in Blairsville. Wish I had gone to sign up for my benefits sooner.

Jerry Driskell

Bell ringing Union County Historic Courthouse



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