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issue. For the convenience of the public we will have two hearings on the same day, one during the day, 11 a.m., and one at 6 p.m. The third hearing will be a week later. The property tax rate (millage rate) will be set at a meeting the following week.

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

A. We hope to have all of our information to the state of Georgia by the end of August and have the property tax bills mailed out sometime the first week of September.

Q. When will the property tax bills be due?

A. They will be due the same as last year on Dec. 20th. But we are all working really hard to get them sent out early so that taxpayers will have more time to pay and prepare. For those who want to pay the bills prior to Christmas, there will be plenty of time to do that as well, so that everything does not come due near the end of the year.

Q. Why are you raising property taxes in this still slow economy?

A. I refused to raise property taxes over the past several years because the economy has really been terrible and I knew the public simply could not afford it. While the economy is still not fully recovered, we feel like we must have a modest increase this year. The economy in Union County is recovering ahead of many areas with an improved job market and we simply cannot wait any longer for an increase, especially with the new courthouse security requirement.

Q. Can't you make more cuts to the budget instead of increasing our property taxes?

A. We have already cut the budget over the past several years to the point that if we are going to continue to provide exceptional services to the public, we have no choice. If you call for an ambulance, fire engine, sheriff's vehicle, or county road vehicle, we not only want the best life saving equipment available, but the best trained and capable personnel, and reliable equipment capable of performing any needed task. Likewise, if you attended any of the many baseball or softball regular and tournament games this year, walked in our park, visited a festival, attended the Farmers Market, Library, Horse Arena, Community Center or Civic Center, or many of the other county facilities, you know we have one of the best equipped and maintained recreation programs, facilities and parks in Georgia. The list of assets is long and the quality of life for our citizens is second to none.

Q. How does our property tax rate compare with other counties?

A. Even with all the

amenities that are provided to our citizens, we have an exceptionally low property tax rate. Union County government currently has the third lowest property tax rate in the entire state out of 159 counties. Our school system, which will not be having a property tax increase this year, currently has the fifth lowest property tax rate in the state. And when you combine both the county and school current mil rate (county 5.408 mills, school 11.798 mills, for a total of 17.206 mills), Union County as a whole (school and county combined) currently has the second lowest property tax rate in the entire state.

Q. Will our current low property tax ratings change with the upcoming property tax increase?

A. That will be impossible to know until later in the year when all counties have set their millage rate. But based on the current rates, we would only drop from third lowest to fifth lowest mill rate in the state and when combined with the school, we will either still be second lowest in Georgia or possibly drop one spot and that is still exceptional.

Q. What will this property tax increase cost a typical property taxpayer?

A. While we still do not have the actual numbers, if you have homestead exemption and a home valued at \$100,000 your estimated property tax would increase from \$205.50 to \$223.82, an increase of \$18.32. If you have a piece of property valued at \$200,000 with no exemptions, your property taxes would increase from \$432.64 to \$471.20, an increase of \$38.56.

Q. Can you be specific on why our property taxes will have to increase?

A. Yes, I certainly can. The new courthouse security is about half of the increase at \$250,000. County insurance costs increased \$35,000. Indigent Defense for youth (those who cannot pay) rose \$113,000, indigent defense for adults increased \$25,000, new aerial photography, \$20,000, public works \$52,000, library state required benefits increase \$25,000, and while we are still working on the final budget, fuel is higher, insurance is higher, wages and benefits are higher, court costs are increasing and public safety, sheriff's operation and jail costs are increasing, just to name a few.

Raising property taxes is something as a commissioner I never want to do, but we all are working very hard to keep the cost as low as possible and the employees have done an exceptional job maintaining services and taking on more duties to keep our payroll down, all to help make this one of the best counties anywhere in which to live.

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on you". Dad couldn't believe his ears and said, "Roy, you'll never know the influence you had on me and I want to thank you for helping me get started in life".

Roy bought my dad uniforms, gloves, bats and whatever else was needed to play the game of baseball. He drove Daddy and his friends all over the country to play the game they all loved. Through the game of baseball Roy taught my Dad about life. Dad learned the importance of teamwork. He learned about the importance of hard work through practice. Dad learned that people don't win every time they take the field. Finally, Roy loaned my father the money to help him get out on his own which taught Dad the importance of helping other people. Roy Reeves was a great man and my father and a bunch of boys from Phil Campbell are his legacy.

There are many farmers and others in our community that have been an important influence in the field of agriculture and each year we try to honor those individuals at the Farmers Market. This year we will hold our Union County

Agricultural Hall of Fame Celebration at the Farmers Market on August 30, 2014. If you know of someone that should be inducted into this Hall of Fame please come by the Cooperative Extension Office and pick up an application. Those eligible include Farmers, Agricultural Teachers, Industry Leaders, etc. Past recipients include Jim Dobson, Marion Dyer, Robert Harkins, Newt Miller, Bud Hill, Alvin Todd, and Blueford Dyer. Applications should be turned in by August 18, 2014. The Union County Historical Society will judge the applications and winners will be announced at the Farmers Market on August 30.

Finally, the Farmers Market and Trash Treasures Sales are going well. Many people come to the Trash to Treasures Sale on both Thursday and Friday. We do not allow you to leave tables and merchandise set up overnight. However, if you are present and selling items on Thursday you can pay in advance for Friday and leave a cone overnight in your stall. For more information please visit our website at FarmersMarket@uniongov.com.

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cere thanks to this year's Power Breakfast sponsor, Jeff Davis State Farm. Located at 211B Cleveland Street, Blairsville, GA, Jeff and his team can take care of all of your insurance needs. Stop by or call them at 706-835-2886.

Please make plans to join us as we welcome Wes Durham

to Union County. Due to limited seating, all reservations must be made on or before Friday, August 15 by contacting the Chamber office at 706-745-5789. The cost is \$25 for Chamber members and \$35 for the general public. Attendees may also register and make payment online at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com.

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signals. People are confused enough without the children of God adding to the already complex situation. Sometimes I interrogate myself with questions such as: "How's my

preaching?" "How's my giving?" "How's my leadership?" "How's my role as a husband?" "How's my record in sharing Christ?" "How's my testimony as a parent to my children and

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balls out of all the bounty. Mom would toss them in Fruit Fresh, place in a plastic freezer bag with a twisty and then place in a freezer cardboard box (remember them?). Friends of the family told my folks that this wasn't such a great idea. "Melons have too much water. They won't hold up to freezing". We had the last word on that. All winter long we had what seemed to be "fresh cantaloupe".

That year my folks dug out some old Sicilian recipes and canned eggplant slices in olive oil and garlic that were just killer. And peppers were pickled in a savory brine that went so well in the middle of February with a large chunk of Italian bread, Genoa salami and provolone cheese. Oh, how I wish I had the recipes for them now.

Once they had the canning bug, they started buying bushels of goodies that we didn't grow. My favorite was the canned peaches. The shelves of the basement were lined with Ball Jars filled with pickles, jams and jellies; but none could be more enticing than seeing those pale orange flesh half moons, soaking in a light sugary syrup on a frigid cold winter's day.

Preparation of the peaches was a little more tedious than other canning, mainly because of the blanching method of peeling the fruit. Then we'd cut them in half, pit them and place gently in a quart jar. The syrup can be made with sugar and water, but I'm going to give you an even better recipe. Bring to a boil six cups of water, 1/2 cup of local honey and 1 tablespoon of almond extract. Over each jar of peaches, add 1 teaspoon of lemon juice (from that plastic lemon is just fine). Now finish filling the jars with the syrup, leaving about a half inch space from the top. Place your lids and tighten. Hot water bath in your canning pot for only 15 minutes. Take out of the water bath and cool for 24 hours, covering the jars with a thick towel or blanket.

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Decades later, his powder-blue eyes would tear up at the memory of his first glimpse of Lady Liberty standing above New York Harbor with her torch lifted high. When we'd ask him to tell us about those early, unimaginably difficult, years, he had one answer: "That's water under the bridge." For Dad, it was always about tomorrow. Yesterday was, well, yesterday.

In America, he taught us, tomorrow held the promise of men's freedom earned but there were certain unwritten rules which had to be followed: rules based on self-control, delayed gratification, hard work, thrift, self-sufficiency and simple honesty.

A handshake is a man's bond, he taught us. Whether in business or in marriage and family, a promise is a promise. A man is measured by his word, he said. To willfully break a promise was unconscionable, bordering on the nearly unforgivable.

He lived his life to teach family and friends to give, to support, to forgive and forget.

His belief in a kind, gentle providence never wavered.

Not to minimize it, but the greatest generation was founded on, rooted in, my dad's generation.

But, first and foremost, Dad was a legal immigrant.

George Mitchell

Bell Ringing Union
County Old Courthouse



August 8, 2014
in memory of
Murray S. King
by Kendra H. King

**Bell ringing information
at 706-745-5493**

to my grandchildren?" Lately, I have asked "How's my driving

testimony?" My wife would say there is room for improvement.