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The \$62,354 question: it was a meter glitch; Minor was wrong in report

Attorney Sorgen: Minor Report erred when it determined Akins made false reports to Internal Revenue Service

By Charles Duncan
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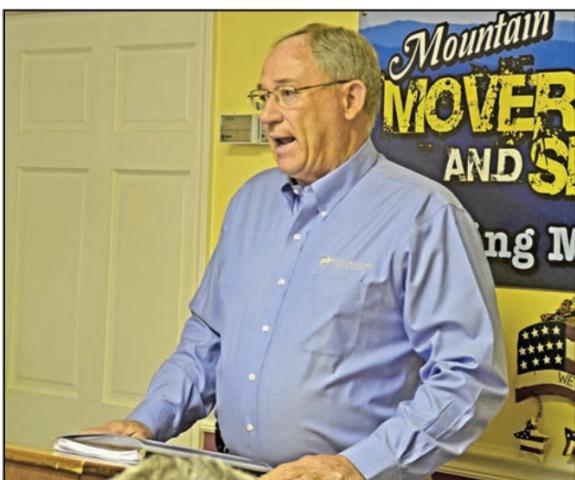
Young Harris - A \$62,354 meter glitch and a \$30,000 internal opinion were the topics of conversation on Friday at Mary's Southern Grill as the Mountain Movers and Shakers played host to a group from Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

Included in the group that spoke to the crowd, were four of the seven candidates for the upcoming EMC Board of Directors elections.

Also, Towns County Board Member Jerry Nichols, who is not up for reelection this year, said that the bill for Taylor and Taylor Construction that was printed in the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald in the Aug. 13 editions, was not correct. The document, obtained by the newspapers showed a balance of \$107,998.43 owed by Taylor and Taylor. The EMC corrected \$62,354 of that balance, saying it was a meter glitch.

"What I can tell you is that the bill you've seen in the paper is incorrect, that is not a bill," Nichols said. "There was a meter on the crusher that for some unknown reason read wrong. I mean we don't have any accounts anywhere on Blue Ridge EMC that uses \$60,000 worth of power a month."

"As soon as that came up, the correction was made," Nichols said. "Unfortunately,



BRMEMC Director Jerry Nichols says a meter glitch caused a \$62,354 error at Taylor and Taylor Construction. The financial error was corrected, Nichols said. Photo/Charles Duncan

someone in our office, which is a problem, and it's a problem that y'all really need to be concerned about, is that somebody in that office put out information that is private. Because we are not a government organization, we are a private entity. It just so happens that we're nonprofit, but we don't fall under all the things that government organizations have.

"Someone inside our office made a snapshot of that, sent it out to someone that sent it to the paper, and the paper ran with it because it's a great story," Nichols said. "That \$62,000 is not a bill, it is certainly not a loan."

EMC Board members maintain that they knew nothing about the Taylor and

Taylor Construction debt until April 2014.

Nichols said that a lot of things have been brought up about BRMEMC board members regarding compensation and perks.

According to a handout provided by Nichols, the total compensation for BRMEMC board members is \$61,650. General Manager Matthew Akins is paid \$115,139 annually, according to the Nichols handout. Akins' salary is the lowest among EMCs in North Georgia.

"Anything that you want to know about the co-op, if you will call, or come by the office, go in and talk to anyone there, as long as it's not about personal accounts, then we'll do it," Nichols said.

Nichols also talked about the customer service charge, saying, "it's the cost of doing business."

"More than 63 percent of our total costs of doing business is buying power from TVA," Nichols said, adding that the customer service charge pays the bills. "The service charge is for everybody, everybody pays a flat fee."

Nichols added that the duties of the board of directors were to set policy and oversee operations.

"We are not into the day-to-day operations, we don't tell people who to hire or who to fire," Nichols said.

As Board Member Lenny Parks addressed the crowd, Wesley Hoppood asked about the Internal Revenue Service Form 990.

EMC Counsel Lawrence Sorgen interjected that EMC Attorney Steven Minor had stated his opinion about the IRS Form 990, rather than facts about the matter. In the \$30,000 report paid for by the EMC membership, Sorgen said that Minor opined that General Manager Matthew Akins had violated his oath to the IRS.

"A tax counsel confirmed to the Board (EMC) that (Minor's opinion) was wrong," Sorgen told the crowd. "We're looking into whether those 990s need to be amended."

The utility company has more than 43,000 customers with more than 49,000

electric meters serving a five-county area that includes Union, Towns, and Fannin counties in Georgia and Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina.

The EMC will hold its annual meeting Sept. 13 at Anderson Music Hall in Hiawassee.

Among the items to address, the election of three members to the EMC Board of Directors.

Online voting is available at www.brmemc.com until Sept. 10 at 4 p.m. Login information (identification number and verification code) is provided on the front side of each member's bill.

There are three members nominated by the Cooperative's Board of Directors. Brian Trout of Clay County, NC, Julie Payne of Towns County, and Lenny Parks of Suches are seeking reelection to the Board of Directors.

There are four persons nominated by petition of the Membership. They are Chris Logan of Brasstown, NC, Steven Phillips of Towns County, Charles Jenkins of Blairsville, and Mike Patton of Blairsville.

Members from the five-county service area can vote for all three Board member seats.

Trout spoke to the Shakers group, telling them that he came aboard in April, just as the Taylor controversy came to light.

"That was a welcome to the Board moment," Trout

said.

His opponent, Logan, currently is on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Forestry Association, serving as Forestry Vice President of the North Carolina Forestry Association.

Logan told the Shakers crowd that it might be time for a fresh face.

"I just want to be a fresh face moving forward," Logan said. "I think the people want a fresh face that knows how to run a business, that knows how to turn a profit and that knows how to cut costs and to look at the bottom line."

As for the supposed \$30,000 internal report, Logan said the membership should not have paid for that.

"I think it's ridiculous," Logan said. "Especially when the cost of the debt was only \$48,000 and then they pay \$30,000 to get an opinion on how the \$48,000 debt accrued."

"They paid a lawyer who is still a part of the overall EMC family," Logan said. "They should have went outside the EMC to find someone to conduct a real investigation. This one looked pretty self-serving."

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors appointed Trout as a Clay County, NC director in April 2014. He filled the unexpired term of the late Elois Anderson.

Payne was appointed by the EMC Board of Directors

See EMC, 2A

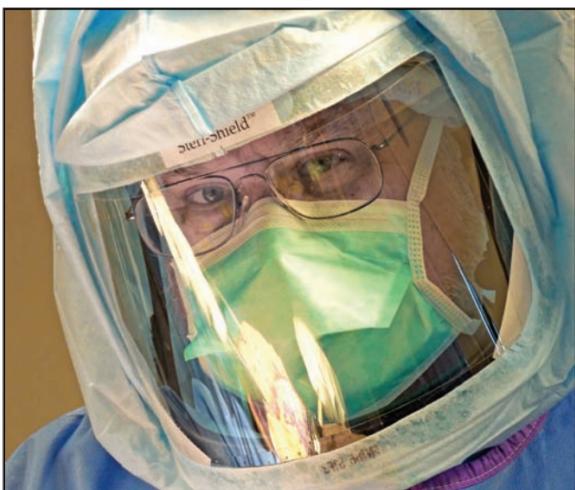
Nuelle adds a fresh face of professionalism at UGH

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

This is part one of a two-part series on Union General Hospital's Dr. Doug Nuelle. The next news article will follow the innovations of Dr. Nuelle in his years as a medical doctor.

Meet Doug Nuelle. He's been playing banjo since he was 16, and currently performs standup bass in a local jazz band. He's an historian of sorts, an inventor, a veteran, a lecturer - oh, and he's also a board certified orthopedic surgeon with a wall of credentials, practicing medicine out of Blairsville's own Union General Hospital. "People have asked about the diplomas on the wall, and they say, 'Man, you must be smart.' And I say, no, I've just lived long enough," said Dr. Nuelle with a laugh. "I've done a lot of things through the years."

Dr. Nuelle obtained a bachelor's in chemistry from



Dr. Doug Nuelle, an orthopedic surgeon, is now practicing in Union County at Union General Hospital in Blairsville.

the University of Missouri in St. Louis in 1969, and attended the School of Medicine at Washington University, also in St. Louis, where he received a doctor of medicine in 1973.

He spent the next year undergoing a straight general

surgical internship at Barnes Hospital, which is affiliated with Washington University. Next stop, the Navy, as Dr. Nuelle served two years as a lieutenant in the Medical Corps during the Vietnam War. He was stationed aboard the U.S.S. Proteus AS-19, a

nuclear submarine.

"I came back and did my residency in orthopedics at the Campbell Clinic in Memphis," said Dr. Nuelle. "Most people don't realize that Willis Campbell was basically the founder of orthopedics in this country."

The Willis C. Campbell Clinic is a prestigious training ground, with only a handful of candidates accepted each year.

"I was lucky enough to get to go there, because my professors were some of the best in the world. Out of the 19 guys there, 11 of them had been past presidents of either the American Board or the American Academy of Orthopedics," said Dr. Nuelle.

For the past 35 years, Dr. Nuelle has been in private practice, specializing in adult reconstruction, such as hip and total knee replacements, and arthroscopy, which is a minimally invasive joint procedure. He worked out of

See Dr. Nuelle, 2A

Heritage Festival celebrates Union County history



By Todd Forrest
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Since 1887, the first Monday of September marks the date when our nation pays tribute to the social and economic achievements of American workers and their contribution to the strength and prosperity of their country. And since 1976, the Union County Historical Society has paid tribute to the social, economic, and artistic

achievements of the area's rich Scotch-Irish and Native American cultures.

Each Labor Day weekend, the Historical Society presents the annual Heritage Festival, and like its name implies, the festival celebrates the traditions and beliefs of North Georgian's, dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries.

Located on the grounds and inside the Mountain Life

See Heritage, 3A

Litton, Moon, Hamby and Butt join Ag Hall of Fame

By Charles Duncan
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It's harvest time and the best sign of that - the annual inductions into the Union County Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Four more were inducted on Saturday at the Union County Farmers Market. They are Kathryn Litton, Neal Moon, Hoyt Hamby and Garner Butt.

The tradition of inducting local farmers into the Agricultural Hall of Fame started a decade ago.

Bud Hill, Robert Harkins, of Suches, and Sid Chandler, the legendary first County Extension Agent were inducted during last year's ceremony.

The ceremonies began Saturday as Union County Historical Society President Bud Hill introduced Litton, who brought her green thumb to Union County in 1979.

Litton arrived here from



The Class of 2014, L to R, Kathryn Litton, Hoyt Hamby, Neal Moon and not pictured, Garner Butt. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Mississippi, where she was the only licensed female tree surgeon in the state.

Litton, owner of Litton Landscaping, is well known as a member of the Blairsville Garden Club, where she has served since 1980.

She also is an author of *Here Come the Natives*, a book about native plants that

are available commercially.

Litton also was instrumental in starting the Tree City USA project for the city of Blairsville. The city has been recognized as a Tree City USA city for the past 20 Arbor Days.

"Kathryn, when I look at a flower, I think of you every time I see one," Akins

said. Neal Moon is no stranger in Union County. He served as Union County Extension Service Director from 1972 to 1989.

He was raised on a dairy farm in Walton County and later in life, helped a grandson, who raised market hogs and took part in 4-H and FFA livestock exhibitions.

"Neal shared new and updated information from the UGA College of Agriculture with area farmers, homeowners and the 4-H program and other youths," said Mickey Cummings, who was mentored by Moon as a young extension agent.

Moon also worked hard to support agricultural organizations that included the Georgia Cattleman's Association, Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District, the Blairsville Garden Club as well as 4-H and

See Hall, 3A

Sen. Isakson says 'ISIS needs to know we have a strategy'

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Young Harris - U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., met with area residents in a Town Hall meeting on the campus of Young Harris College last week.

Young Harris College President Cathy Cox introduced several special visitors in attendance were Georgia State Sens. John Wilkinson, Steve Gooch and Frank Ginn, former Governor and U.S. Sen. Zell Miller and his wife, Shirley Miller, as well as Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris. Cox spoke fondly of



Longtime friends Johnny Isakson and Zell Miller reminisce in Young Harris. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Sen. Isakson.

"He is a great friend of mine, and a certainly a great

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Cruise In at UC Nursing Home

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Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade Oct. 11th

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Ride to Remember Sat. Sept 14th

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UCHS Football Fri 9/5 @ Lumpkin County 7:30 PM
UCMS Softball Wed 9/3 vs. East Hall 5:30 PM
Thurs 9/4 @ Rabun Co. 6 PM
Fri & Sat 9/5&6 @ Veterans Tournament Oconee Co.
UCMS Football Thurs 9/4 @ Gilmer Co. 5:30