

The bottom line

Ladies and gentlemen, turn your calculators on. Let's start with what former BRMEMC Board President Terry Taylor is on record as owing the BRMEMC membership - \$45,000-plus. Add in \$30,000 for the Minor Report. Add in \$62,000 for the glitch of all glitches that BRMEMC wrote off the books for Taylor & Taylor Construction.

Now, get ready folks, add in \$57,000-plus and some change for a six-month severance package for former BRMEMC General Manager Matthew Akins. An insurance package is included. Makes you wonder who has the ink pen to the membership's checking account doesn't it?

Roughly, that's about \$200,000 and some change, out of the membership's pocketbook.

That's right, in a special called session, reportedly on Sept. 1, the Board of Directors approved a six-month severance package for former GM Akins.

A severance package for someone that resigned? I've never heard of that happening. I've heard of that happening when someone is terminated, but never for someone resigning.

The tough news is that the majority of board members followed through with a motion to approve the six-month severance package. They also voted to approve a BRMEMC budget that included \$1 million in miscellaneous expenses - that means no breakdown of how the money would be spent.

How do I know all of this? Well, it's now public knowledge. It's on Facebook, Topix, and on the street; it's in Superior Court documents.

What do we do about it? Well, I think it's a done deal, and there's nothing we can really do about it.

Your votes in the upcoming Board of Directors election can assure that catastrophes like this never, ever happen again.

The make up of the new board, could very well have a 5-4 swing, one way or another. How you vote is extremely important.

We know that the board will have fresh blood in Union and Fannin counties, it's a given. The most important race is in Towns County, where the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* endorse Roy Perren as the new BRMEMC director in Towns County.

That's the bottom line.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Where Was God?

On September 15, 1999, shots rang out in the sanctuary of Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, TX. A deranged gunman invaded the "Saw You At the Pole" rally for high school students who prayed at their schools' flag poles early that morning. These youngsters faced what no one should: pure, murderous evil. Seven killed. Seven wounded.

Pastor Al Meredith could never have imagined what he was about to endure. In the course of a few days, he faced his own shock, rushed to the hospital, held the hurting, conducted funerals, answered the media. Then Sunday came. Ignoring the suggestions to cancel services, he preached a message that was literally heard around the world. "Where Was God?"

In a calm but earnest voice, he acknowledged the shocking news. Why? Why us? How could this happen? Where is God in all of this? If an all-powerful God really loves us, why did he let this happen? Why does evil abound?

He found the answer in Romans 8:28. "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." He explained that believers have confidence that there are things we can know. The first is that we can know God, know truth. Simon and Garfunkel sang, "I don't know what is real, I am blinded by the light of God and truth and right, and I wander..." And that's the best the world has to offer.

Pastor Al explained further that God is in control, and can bend any evil to accomplish good. The proof? The most evil thing that has ever happened in the world was God the Son tortured and killed, but out of that came the most good the world will ever know: salvation for all who trust Jesus.

This verse is a promise with a condition. It is for those who trust Jesus, the called according to His purpose. The original word for church means "called-out ones." We, the church, need each other, especially in crisis. Jesus calls you to love him and one another.

I recently contacted Pastor Al on the occasion of his retirement. I asked for his reflections on these 16 years since the

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Questions and Answers

The following questions are related to property values. Your property tax bills from the county will be mailed on Sept. 10. The values set on your property can not be changed until next year, when values can be appealed between January and April, but here is some information that may help in the future.

Q. What exactly is the Board of Assessors?

A. The County Board of Tax Assessors notifies taxpayers when changes are made to the value of the property (sets the value of your property); receive and review all appeals filed on those values; and insures that the appeal process proceeds according to Georgia law. In addition, they approve all exemptions claimed by the taxpayer.

Q. What is the difference in market value of property and assessed value of property?

A. Market value is the retail value of your property as determined by the Board of Assessors. Assessed value is the amount you actually pay your property tax on. The assessed value in Georgia is set by law at 40 percent of the market value. So if your home is valued at \$100,000, you only pay property taxes on 40 percent of that value.

Q. Who appoints the Board of Assessors?

A. They are appointed by the County Commissioner (me).

Q. Does the Tax Commissioner report to or control the Board of Assessors?

A. No. These are two totally separate entities, with neither office controlling the other. The Board of Assessors sets the value and taxability of your property and then the Tax Commissioner collects the taxes based on this assessed value.

Q. What is the purpose of the Board of Equalization?

A. The Board of Equalization is appointed by the Grand Jury. If the Board of Assessors does not approve your appeal then the taxpayer has the right to appeal to the Board of Equalization and they will hear appeals related to value, uniformity, denial of exemption, taxability.

Q. After I appeal to the Board of Equalization if I am not satisfied with the value they place on my property, how do I appeal that decision?

A. If the taxpayer is not satisfied with the opinion of the Board of Assessors and the Board of Equalization, you have the right to appeal your property values to the Superior Court.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Go Take a Hike

Autumn is just around the corner and with its arrival comes the beginning of one of the best hiking seasons of the year. The crisp air and cool temperatures make for comfortable and enjoyable hikes.

Additionally, the explosion of fall color can be more deeply appreciated from the trails that wind through our county and the overlooks that offer magnificent views.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Just in time for the change of season, the Blairsville-Union County Appalachian Trail Community Advisory Committee has released a new hiking trails guide. This handy pocket guide features a full color map with over 20 trails identified throughout Union County. Each listing provides trail information including location, hiking distance, and level of strenuousness. To pick up your copy, stop by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce at 129 Union County Recreation Road or go online to our brochure room at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com.

As part of the Appalachian Trail Community Advisory Committee's efforts and in partnership with Union County Middle School, four "Classroom on the Trail" days have been scheduled for the month of September. This will involve four groups of students rotating from one class area to another for 30 minute sessions with their english, math, science, and social studies teachers. Local volunteer guides will lead them on short hikes between classrooms and allow stu-

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The Color of One's Blood

This coming Saturday, Sept. 12th is College Rivalry Day at the Farmers Market. Wear your team colors and wait for your fight song to be played over the load speaker so you can give a cheer. We want you there in full regalia. I, on the other hand, will be wearing denim.

Bulldog fans bleed red and black. Gators ooze orange and blue and the Tennessee Vols leave an orange residue wherever they go. That I suffer from color blindness this time of year has to do with scars I bear from 45 years ago.

I was born into a family of musicians. Despite my tin ear I was given opportunities at a very young age to study music. The Catholic high school marching band director knew I could read music. The spring semester of sixth grade he came and asked me if I would like to learn clarinet and play in the high school marching band. I'm twelve years old and you want to offer me an opportunity to play Carnegie Hall on an instrument I've never even held in my hands before? Sure, I'm in!

It didn't take me long to learn the fingering and I seemed to have a natural embouchure (a stuffy word that means "stiff upper lip" which is an expression for a stuffy person, but not in this context). That August I was getting the opportunity to meet my peers, albeit, they were much older than me. With the field being used for football practice our first marching instruction was in the High School gymnasium, the Roman Coliseum as far as I was concerned.

I watched as the other clarinetists attached their music holder to their instruments and I awkwardly followed suit. The score was handed out, no bigger than a 3x5 card, so as to not block your view while you are marching. The director, Tony DiRusso, gave us instructions as to how to follow his count and what foot to lead with. The drums rolled and the counter was echoing off the cement walls. We sounded miserable, but we were moving across the gym in what seemingly was total unison. The director didn't agree.

He stopped us cold. He instructed us to get in a large circle. He then told us how miserable

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Farmers Market Moment

JorAnne Leone



Letters to the Editor ...

A life saver

Dear Editor,

I enjoyed the article about Sheriff Officer Walker and the rattlesnake at United Community Bank. When I was a fire officer in Dade County, Fla., our unit got a call about a rattler on an elderly lady's porch. She was afraid for herself and her little dog. Dade County has a serpentarium where they collect venom to treat snake bite victims. Our firemen could sell poisonous snakes to them for 40 cents a foot. The extra money came in handy to finance fishing trips. When we arrived at the house we sprayed the reptile with a CO2 fire extinguisher. The cold CO2 put the snake to sleep and we picked him up and put him in a burlap sack. We kept him in a small cage at the fire station where he stayed until we moved him to his new home at the serpentarium. He didn't know when he crawled up onto that lady's porch that he would end up saving human lives.

Joe Walker

Greatness

Dear Editor,

We hear the slogan "Make America Great Again" and it gives me pause to consider what is "Greatness?"

I don't think we ever stopped being great. The nostalgia for some more perfect time while appealing, is an inaccurate reading of history.

I believe we demonstrate greatness when we take seriously "Liberty and Justice for All" by expanding basic rights and protecting the least of our citizens. When we address past wrongs and set them right.

We are great when we deliver on the promises to workers who have paid into Social Security that they will have a secure and healthy retirement, or in the event of disability their children will have a safety net.

We are great when we work together to face the big challenges; when we find the will and money to pursue big ideas. Big ideas like quality public education, the space program, Internet, highway system, support for long term research to address health and energy challenges. Closer to home we enjoy our TVA lakes.

We are great when we use our strong economy and military to bring our enemies to the table instead of the battlefield. Treaties do not make friends of enemies but discourage some bad behavior. The Camp David Accords have lasted 35 years.

When we approach the future with courage, generosity and a commitment to the common good we will deserve to be called great.

Ruth Kruger

Another lesson

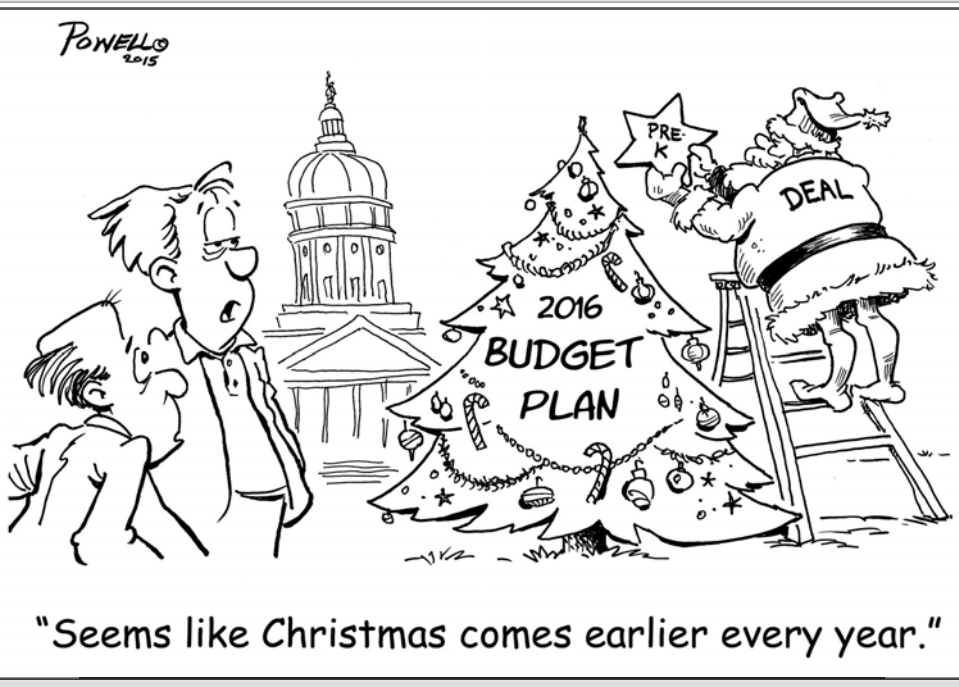
Dear Editor,

The letter by Lester Smith of 8-19-2015 was interesting and informative. The dual meaning of the word Adam from Hebrew was observed. Adam can mean man or mankind, which includes women, and that can change the meaning of some verses.

In the previous letter by Walter Kerr of 8-12-2015 it was expressed that Genesis 2:4-5 expressly stated that Genesis 1 and the beginning of Genesis 2 contained the design or creation before it happened. Genesis 1 tells us of God's plan. Chapters and versus after that, including Genesis 5 were sketchy details of the plan taking physical form.

Something new should be examined. Genesis 1:26 says: "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness..." Verse 27 says: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." It appears that Our Father in Heaven and Our Mother in Heaven, together, were the creators of Adam and Eve and mankind. Paul mentioned this idea in Hebrews 12:9, "Fur-

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"Seems like Christmas comes earlier every year."

An amazing time

Dear Editor,

What is the Millennium that God talks about in the book of Revelation in the Bible? Well we need to back up about seven years earlier when Jesus Christ comes back to gather His faithful followers to Himself in the air. (1.Thessalonians chapter 4:16-17) Then the great tribulation comes on the scene where the anti-christ reigns over all the earth for the first three and a half years. Great promises are made and prosperity is at an all-time high. Things look pretty amazing for everyone, but then the last three and a half years the anti-christ shows his true colors and becomes an evil creature like his master, Satan. It is a terrible time to be living in, where everyone is ordered to receive the mark of the beast in order to buy and sell, if not you will be killed for your disobedience. Then at the end of his reign the anti-christ is done away with and Jesus Christ comes and sets up His Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years and peace on earth will become a reality and we who have been raptured will come and reign with Jesus as well. What will we all do for 1,000 years? Only God knows, but whatever it will be, you can bet it's going to be amazing as well as awesome. Learn more about "The Millennium" in the 20th chapter of Revelation. It will change the way you think about the end times we are living in today.

Frank F. Combs

Be alarmed

Dear Editor,

President Barack Obama has nominated a DeKalb County state court judge, Dax Lopez, for the lifetime position as a federal judge in the Northern District of Georgia. If we really oppose the crime of illegal immigration, we should be very, very alarmed.

Dax Lopez has served on the board of directors for the Atlanta-based activist, anti-enforcement immigration, Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO) since 2004, Republican Dax Lopez should never become a federal judge.

While Georgia suffers more illegals than Arizona, and Gov. Deal says we are spending at least \$2.4 billion each year on the crime of illegal immigration, anti-borders GALEO lobbies for amnesty and has marched in Atlanta streets demanding we stop enforcement of our immigration laws. Lopez has made it clear that he "agrees with GALEO's mission" - which includes strong stands against English as our official language and active opposition to voter ID.

Despite the fact that it is a federal offense to transport illegal aliens, GALEO counts as an "accomplishment" on its website their working with other groups to organize a mass bus trip to Washington, D.C. in 2010 to march and lobby against immigration enforcement. GALEO also boasts of its lobbying against local police honoring detainees from federal immigration enforcement officials (ICE) so that criminal illegal aliens are not released back onto the streets of Georgia from local jails. (This is what

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The Weaning-Off House

My great grandfather, Lon Cummings, bought part of his father's farm, inherited part of it and in 1906 entered (or homesteaded) another portion of land. Papa said his daddy owned the better part of 400 acres and ran approximately 8 mules on their farm. The first house he owned as a young man was on the backside of his farm. As his family grew Lon decided to build another house which would provide more room for the family. The original house later became known as the weaning-off house. It was used to wean my papa's brothers and sisters off of their parental support.

The first young couple to use the house was Uncle Pick. Papa's older brother was admired by many people. He later became Probate Judge of Franklin County, Alabama. But, when Uncle Pick was newly married he needed a little help getting started in life. So, he and his young bride moved into the house to help them get started on their own. But, it wasn't long until Pick gained an economic footing, so he moved out of the weaning-off house.

Soon Papa and Granny were married and they lived in the weaning-off house for about 3 years. My father and his younger brother were born in the house. After Uncle Bud was born my grandmother became ill and almost died. She developed an infection during the birthing process and my 24 year old grandfather was told his young bride would not make it through the night. Lon and his son walked to the woods and gathered some wild herbs. For the next 6 months my grandmother was given this herb in the form of a tea. She lived for 60 more years.

One day while in town Lon met a friend that made him a proposition. The man owned about 600 acres not far from the weaning-off house. He offered to sell/finance part of the property to Lon's sons and son-in-law. Soon Coon, Pickens, Clay and their brother-in-law, Hollis, found themselves as the proud owners of 80 acres apiece on what would become "Cummings Road". The young men helped each other clear property of trees which were sold for lumber. The stumps were left intact and the men used "scratchers" to plow around the stumps to make a crop. Each man paid for the land in less than 10 years. Papa ended up purchasing 2 full tracts and a part of another tract of land. Most of the stories in this column happened on this land.

There is a large American Beech close by the property and is now owned by the TVA. While hunting with my grandfather I stumbled across the tree and located within a heart on the east side of the trunk was carved the initials "CBC + GMC". Papa smiled as he remembered his first year on his very own place. He said, "I carved this not too long after we moved out of the

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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