

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Remembering

It's easy for me to relate to Sharon and Jim Whittle. The Whittles lost their only child, Badge No. 221, Deputy Derrick Whittle, 38 years old as he died in the line of duty in an accident while responding to a domestic dispute with shots fired.

When someone dies under these circumstances it's usually hard to relate to such a tragedy.

Badge No. 171, Lt. Durwin Potts, 30 years old, the only child of Wymer and Jean Potts, also died in the line of duty in Whitfield County, Dec. 21, 1996.

Durwin died from injuries sustained in an automobile accident as he and a reserve deputy were responding to assist another officer on Georgia 71. Their patrol car rolled several times when Lt. Potts swerved to avoid a dump truck that had pulled out in front of them. Lt. Potts succumbed to his injuries the following day.

The driver of the truck fled the scene of the accident, but was arrested the following day. The man was sentenced to 5 years in prison and 14 years of probation.

Lt. Potts, who died in the line of duty, had served with the Whitfield County Sheriff's Office for 9 years.

Durwin Potts was my first cousin. His father and my mother were brother and sister.

Durwin was Josh Randle to me. You know, the Steve McQueen character better known as the bounty hunter in *Wanted: Dead or Alive*. That was his favorite television show.

As kids, Durwin and I searched my family's backyard for bad guys. Since he was Josh Randle, he always got his man.

Durwin always admired and respected my Uncle Harlan Duncan, who served many years as sheriff here in Union County. It was Uncle Harlan that inspired Durwin to go into law enforcement as a career.

The day-in, day-out lives of law enforcement officers and other public servants is one of dedication. They spend countless hours working their communities, proud to serve and protect.

Public servants - law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics and EMTs are generally never paid enough for their services.

Each day, they put their lives on the line. Each day as they arrive home at the end of their shifts, they say a prayer that they made it home safely. How can you truly compensate someone for that?

Just like Lt. Potts, Deputy Whittle began the day ready to serve and protect. Sept. 15th, 2011 was just another day to Derrick. It stayed that way until the afternoon when a call about a domestic dispute that involved a weapon came in. Shots fired is a scary call for any law enforcement officer responding to a crisis.

Deputy Whittle didn't hesitate to respond and quickly headed in that direction. His patrol car left the roadway and struck a tree near Mt. Pleasant Church Road and Bowers Circle. He was critically injured and was flown to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga, Tenn., where he died on Sept. 18th, 2011.

Unfortunately, the Whittles and I do share a bond - Badge No. 171 and Badge No. 221 paid the ultimate sacrifice to serve and protect.

Letters to the Editor ...

Penalizing the poor

Dear Editor,
This letter concerns the rate increase on our electric bills. It imposes a penalty on the people who use 500 KW with a rate increase of 6.28 percent. The people who can least afford it or those who try to conserve.

The ones who use 2000 KW only have a 2.71 increase. This should be reversed, if not, it should be an equal percent increase across the board.

Some of the people who have the good life, don't think about those who are less fortunate.

By the way, the customer charge on the bill each month, when will it stop?
Richard Johnson

Sorry Cartoon

Dear Editor,
This is an answer to your cartoon about ObamaCare on the 18th of September (last week). I have to say whoever wrote this cartoon does not know what the heck he is talking about. I am sick and tired of the media (all news stations) which are owned by corporate people. They're only interested in money, lots of money, they could care less about any of us.

ObamaCare is going to take care of the old, poor, middle class and whoever else. We want no more overcharges. We will not have to have a cake bake sale or a car wash to help pay for hospital care. It's crazy. Our bills are in the \$20,000 to \$100,000. Most of us do not have that kind of money. We probably will have to sell our houses and go live with our kids or friends.

Please check about ObamaCare and really find out what it does for all of us. Many people are brainwashed from lies so that insurance companies can do the same old thing. You will be charged so much you will never be able to pay it off.

Please go and investigate, not just come back to tell us the same old things the media has been talking about. Please, please go the extra mile for all of our sakes.
Pat Johnson

Navy Yard Attack

Dear Editor,
In all the dust-up over the Navy Yard attack / assassinations / murders / slaughter / executions / massacre, why has nothing been said that the Navy Yard -- like the Sandy Hook Elementary School -- were both soft targets, i.e., designated Gun-Free Zones?

Since America is becoming more "diverse" with time, perhaps signs written in all the world's languages should have been posted at every door, identifying the Navy Yard as a Gun-Free Zone.

Surely signs such as these would have
See Mitchell, page 5A

Debt Free

Who is the happiest person you know? Is it the man or woman with the biggest house? The man with the best automobile? The lady with the finest clothes? The man or woman with the greatest job in all the world? The teenager with the most beautiful girlfriend? The teenager with the most handsome boyfriend? The senior adult who has just retired? The sick person who has been declared whole? Just who is the happiest person you know? Well, probably all of the above would qualify as happy people but from my observation of life, not any of those listed above would qualify as the happiest persons that I know or have known.

While serving a church in South Georgia, on a bright sunny fall day, I met a farmer coming out of the local bank with his face shining as the sun. I greeted him with some silly question like, "Why are you so happy?" "Did you just rob the bank?" "No, Preacher," he said, "I just paid off my loan and I am DEBT FREE!" I have never forgotten the thrill and joy he expressed in his reply.

For the past two or three years, farmers in the area had not fared so well in their harvests. The weather had not been suitable for bountiful crops and the farmers had relied on the bank to finance their next crops. But this particular year had proven to be good and Mr. Tucker was the happiest man I had seen in a long time. Debt free! What a feeling to experience. Maybe, you have retired a house mortgage, paid off a college loan, paid your last car payment or perhaps you have completed the final payment on a hospital bill? If you have finished paying any debt, you know the joy of receiving a statement stamped with the phrase "Paid in Full!" What a blessing!

But the happiest person is the person who can say, "I am debt free spiritually." Without doubt the one who can say, "my sins are forgiven and my sin debt has been 'Paid in Full'" by Jesus Christ, is the most blessed and happiest person in all the earth. Recently, on a local church marquee was the message for everyone for all time: "Jesus Christ died to pay a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay."

See Parris, page 5A

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



SPLOST dollars at work

Q. Is the SPLOST sales tax referendum we will vote on in November (early voting begins Oct. 15), a new tax?

A. No. It is simply a continuation (renewal) of our regular penny sales tax that has been in effect since 1986.

Q. Do other counties also have the SPLOST sales tax?

A. Yes, 154 counties out of 159 counties in Georgia currently have the SPLOST sales tax. It must be voted on to continue every five to six years by the general public.

Q. Why do so many counties vote to approve this SPLOST sales tax as a way to help pay for government?

A. Because it saves money for the property taxpayers. It is really pretty simple. Since most of the projects that will be constructed and equipment purchased with SPLOST sales tax dollars are items necessary for the operation of government, it is easier to pay for a large part of it with sales tax dollars instead of paying for all of it with property tax dollars.

Q. When will the period of the SPLOST sales tax start?
A. The current SPLOST III will continue until March 2015. The SPLOST IV we are voting on in November will not begin until March 2015 through March 2022.

Q. Has Union County successfully utilized the SPLOST sales tax funds in the past?

A. We certainly have. The jail, including roads and bridges, were built with SPLOST I funds. SPLOST II funds built the courthouse, E-911 Center and equipment, along with roads and bridges and some recreation. SPLOST III that we are currently under, has included many county improvements. Five new fire engines, historic courthouse elevator, Suches Community Center, roads and bridges, county facility improvements, new library, additional property and bridges for Meeks Park including a playground and walking trails, renovated Civic Center and gym, Farmers Market and Cannery, Horse Arena and the new Community Center, ambulances, Sheriff's Department vehicles, renovated Fire Department Headquarters, restored Choestoe School House to be used as a voting precinct, and several other projects including assistance with our Senior Citizen Center addition, currently under construction.

Q. How was it possible to complete all of these wonderful projects for our county?

See Paris, page 5A

Spotlight on Tobie Chandler

This week I sat down with Tobie Chandler, Office Administrator at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. Tobie is a top-notch office professional unlike any other! Here are her responses to some of our candid questions.

Q: When did you start working with the Chamber?

A: I was fortunate to begin working at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce on April 18, 2011.

Q: Tell us your favorite thing you do in your position?

A: My favorite thing to do in my position is EVERYTHING! I enjoy the daily variety of my job. Whether I am working with Chamber members, visitors, planning events, or writing our e-newsletters, there is always a good balance in my workload. If you really pressed me for ONE thing, I would say sharing the abundant beauty and activities our County offers to visitors.

Q: Tell us about your most embarrassing Chamber moment?

A: My most embarrassing moment at the Chamber actually happened only a few weeks after I began my employment. I was process-

See Williams, page 5A

One Significant Life Revelation

I am a perpetual student, wanting to learn not just something new everyday, but I seek a plethora of knowledge on my daily plate. This, to me, is fine dining of the mind and soul, more essential than the daily Centrum Silver I ingest. Most of the knowledge I've garnered over my adult life has been from "sound bites"; the Wikipedia version. I've never "studied" anything. I haven't been very disciplined in these matters. Though I knew adages like "practice makes perfect," I never delved into any one topic or hobby, and became accomplished with it.

My mom sent me off to college with a little framed calligraphy that sat on my desk all through those years. It read "Life is hard, yard by yard. Inch by inch, it's a cinch". Reflecting on it would occasionally help me get through a huge reading assignment or a term paper, but it never changed the way I perceived major changes. The subjects or skills that I thought I'd like to be more proficient at, I deemed too much trouble to invest a great deal of time, anticipating that I'd only end up being mediocre, at best.

When I finally decided to lose weight, I knew it had to be "one day at a time". Initially, it was often, "one meal at a time". Eventually, my new eating program became "habit"; a good habit. The results began to slowly "add up", until 4 years later, I was literally half my size.

I never, ever imagined myself disciplined enough to exercise. It just wasn't my girth that stopped me, it was the whole idea of the regiment, and admittedly, something so ridiculous as the fact that I hate to perspire. After the first year of my weight reduction program, I went to Meeks Park Pool with friends for a pool aerobics class. I loved it. It satisfied my need to be social, get exercise that wasn't taxing on the aging bones and I didn't feel myself sweat. Today, I swim and exercise three days a week, dare I say, religiously?

Now I'm working on learning another

See Leone, page 5A

Blairsville-Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



Answers needed

Dear Editor,
As of October 1st my wife and I will be looking to buy a health care policy on the new health care exchange that has or will be created under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare). As always, we have been trying to learn as much as we can about this law before we make any important decisions with regard to the allocation of our limited resources. We find ourselves in a real quandary over this issue. It appears that much of what we are being told about this law is false or misleading and we have not been able to find a reliable source of information locally that we can consult so that we can make informed decisions with respect to our health care investments.

It seems that everyone we speak with has some political or ideological opinion laced with all kinds of stories and myths about ObamaCare that are not at all helpful in giving us direction as to how to make important decisions with respect to our immediate health care needs and the best strategies for us to employ in purchasing a policy. For example, the State of Georgia's insurance commissioner is proposing regulations that will further delay our ability to get factually correct information to assist us to make decisions by attempting to force customer service representatives, (commonly called Navigators), who work for the exchanges, to pass the Georgia Insurance Brokers exam, even though the federal law clearly distinguishes these folks from brokers. Mean-

See Berkman, page 5A

Who Benefits?

Dear Editor,
Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's dapper detective, in solving a perplexing mystery, might very well have posed the question: "Cui Bono?" (who benefits?)
Future archaeologists and historians, puzzling over the remains of what was once Muslim life in the Middle East, the destruction of which was brought about by overwhelming American military force, might likewise ask: "who benefited?" Certainly not the American people, since the trillions of taxpayer's dollars spent in this military overkill brought about the ruination of the American economy and all the disruptive events that followed; to say nothing of the undying entity of what remained of Islam. While memory for most Americans is a fleeting thing, it is not so for others; their memory is long and constant.

What conclusion, then, will these future scientists come to as to "who benefited" from our disastrous folly? It is inevitable that their answer will be "the Israelis," who managed to accomplish the elimination of their Muslim neighbors with the shameful connivance of the vast and influential pro-Israel lobby, solidly in control of our White House, Congress, the

See Ramsey, page 5A

Mack's Teeth

My mother's two uncles, Mack and Rufus Baker, were two men that everyone loved and respected. I looked up to each one because they were tough and yet kind.

They paid extra attention to all of us young boys.

Both men spent a great amount of time in the woods.

Each man enjoyed hunting. As young men they especially enjoyed coon hunting the hills and hollows of Ray Mountain.

Before my Dad ever dated my mother, he was coon hunting with Mack and Rufus.

My Dad had two young dogs about 6 months old and they needed to be trained so my father asked Mack and Rufus if he could go hunting with them.

The two men pulled up in the yard and waited with my grandparents as my Daddy fetched his dogs. The men and the young boy walked across the cotton and corn fields to the "James place."

The dogs struck a coon and began the trailing just after dark. The raccoon led the dogs up and down Turkey Creek and under bluffs for about an hour. Finally, the old coon went up a Black Gum Tree standing on the banks of Turkey Creek.

Uncle Rufus tied the old dogs and told my Dad to let Sam and Lou continue tree barking. Uncle Mack waded out into the middle of Turkey Creek and began to try and squall the coon out of the tree.

Basically, Uncle Mack would make a sound that resembled a fighting coon. This squalling sound will entice a raccoon to walk down a tree and jump into the middle of a pack of dogs. This day was no exception.

The sound made by Mack worked and the old coon began to make its way down the tree. The coon came to within 10 feet of the ground where the dogs and Uncle Mack could see it. So, Uncle Mack made one more of the squalling sounds and the old coon jumped from the tree into the creek.

But, before the coon hit the water, Uncle Mack's false teeth flew from his mouth and hit the water.

The sound of the splashing convinced the dogs that the coon was in the water. So, Sam dove into the water right where the false teeth had landed.

Almost immediately, the coon landed on the dog's back. So, there was Uncle Mack bending over looking for his teeth and the dog was swimming in circles while howling because the coon was biting his ear.

Just when you thought matters couldn't get worse Lou, the other dog, joined the fight.

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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