

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Our apologies Alyssa

In February 2010, Alyssa Arnold began her assault on the Union County Spelling Bee.

As a sixth-grader, Alyssa claimed the countywide Spelling Bee title. As a seventh-grader, she finished as the Bee's runner-up.

In 2012, as an eighth-grader, Alyssa did the impossible, claiming a second countywide Spelling Bee title.

We tell you all this history to correct a story from last week. You see, Emi Leonard isn't the first sixth grader to win the countywide Spelling Bee.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



In all fairness, Alyssa Arnold claimed that distinction in 2010. We guess it was easy to discern that Emi Leonard was the first sixth-grader because most folks remember Alyssa winning as an eighth-grader. She did, but, she also won the countywide Spelling Bee as a sixth-grader.

Alyssa is now a junior, but, she knows how Emi Leonard feels taking down the seventh and eighth graders.

She's excited for Emi and is pulling for her to win the district title on Feb. 28 in Marietta and head to the state championships.

We're pulling for Emi as well.

And we're proud to tell the history behind Alyssa Arnold's triumph in Union County Spelling Bee lore.

My sister Jerri won the countywide spelling bee as a seventh-grader, took district and placed at state. I had to go to school with the legend of my sister way out in front of me.

No, I never won a spelling bee, but, I always took pride in being a good speller.

Spelling bees generate a spark to learn for younger students. They generate pride and encourage an incredible amount of effort. It's actually where the sparks of knowledge begin.

Bees are fruitful and multiply, and the pride of being a good speller sets in at that young age. It creates a kickstart for all avenues of education.

Well, that's where it all started for me. I took more interest in all subjects following an embarrassing defeat at my shot at a spelling bee.

Congratulations Alyssa, and congratulations Emi - we'll be pulling for you Emi on Feb. 28th.

Racing For Change

At the National Prayer Breakfast this month, the keynote address was by NASCAR great, Darrell Waltrip. He told of two racecar drivers, and what made the difference between the two.

The first went at it all the wrong ways. People called him brash, ruthless, pushy, cocky, conceited, aloof, boastful, arrogant, and downright annoying. The fans hated him. The drivers despised him. Richard Petty once told him, "I don't know how you keep a sponsor." His personal life was a mess. He drank too much. He did everything to satisfy himself. That was his lifestyle.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



The second was a driver popular with the fans, respected by his competitors.

Waltrip was both drivers. In his words, "In 1983, my horrible wreck knocked me 'conscious.' It was a wakeup call. If I died would I have gone to heaven or to hell? I thought I was a pretty good guy, but good guys can go to hell. I started attending church." In time, with his wife and the preacher, "I got down on my knees and prayed that the Lord would come into my life and forgive me of my sins and be my Lord and Savior."

"That changed everything. I felt like a new man! I knew I was different. When the Lord comes into your life you're going to be different. You have to be different. The Lord changed me for the better. I still had wrecks. I still had problems. But now I wasn't in it alone."

He was describing the life change that accompanies conversion to Christ. He discovered a basic Christian doctrine, that right living is not the way to right relationship with God; it's the other way around.

This is a theme in Romans 6: "As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." "Our old self was crucified with Him...so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." "Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." "Sin shall not be master of you, for you are not under law but under grace."

If you concede that God has an ethical demand on your life, surely it is good news that to truly know Him is to be empow-

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Questions and Answers

Ordinances Continued - Billboard Ordinance Part A

Q. When and why was the Billboard ordinance adopted?
A. This ordinance was first adopted in December of 2001, the first year that I was in office and was in response to the proliferation of billboards along Hwy. 515.

At the time we had no regulations at all for billboards and desired to protect the beauty of our area while at the same time, support business. Just as you entered Union County on Hwy 515 from Blue Ridge and topped the ridge, there is a beautiful view of the mountains that welcomes us all back home when we have been to Atlanta, and is a beautiful way to welcome visitors as well. Unfortunately, one of the 90' high double billboards was placed there, and it really was a distraction to people entering the county.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Q. How were you able to have this billboard removed?
A. It was a negotiation process. We had no legal way to force it to be removed since at the time it was erected there were no guidelines or ordinance in place. In preparing our new ordinance, and totally with thanks to the owner of the billboard, he and I were able to negotiate some additional locations in place of this billboard and he completely removed the billboards, thus restoring this beautiful gateway view of our county.

Q. What is the definition of a billboard according to the ordinance?
A. It is an advertising sign or a sign which advertises a commodity, product, service, activity or any other person, place or thing, which is not located, found or sold on the premises upon which the sign is located and located along or near state or county highways or county roads or rights-of-way.

Q. What are the size requirements for a billboard?
A. Billboards cannot exceed 30 feet in height. Height is measured from the elevation of the road surface of the nearest roadway to the highest point on the billboard. Also, no billboard can exceed an area of 288 square ft. per face. Of course, billboards already in existence at the time were exempt.

Q. What are some of the other regulations concerning billboards?
A. All billboards must be located in such a way as to protect

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Letters to the Editor ...

Not a history major

Dear Editor,

It is apparent that our President's major was law and not history. His comments about Christians initiating and/or perpetrating the Crusades and the institution of slavery are historically inaccurate or, at best, incomplete.

A little research would show him (or his speech writers!) that it was the Christian ministers and lay people who led the fight against slavery in this country (as well as in England), that the slave trade was largely run by Muslims, that the Muslim nations continued to (and still) have slaves long after the Western world had abolished slavery, and that slavery is not an integral part of Christian doctrine nor was it a practice in which Jesus engaged whereas Mohammed owned many slaves.

A little further research would show that the Crusades began after centuries of Islamic jihad invading, pillaging and conquering Christian lands in present-day North Africa, the middle-East and parts of Europe. Then, as now, the

See McKechnie, page 5A

Give us a break

Dear Editor,

Please give those of us who are devoted readers of the *North Georgia News* a break from the negative raving and raving from an often published George Mitchell on the editorial page. He truly gets on my last nerve. If he's so distressed and upset because of the policies and politics of Union County, why doesn't he move to a greener and more accommodating area, like the city of Detroit?

Cecelia Lacey

God doesn't give up

Dear Editor,

John 14:6- This is Jesus Christ talking: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to My Father in heaven, except through Me).

Wow what a profound statement Jesus has made for all of us to be aware of and take very seriously. When Jesus spoke He spoke with power and authority given to Him from His heavenly Father. When Christ said: I Am The Way, He didn't say there were others ways to get to heaven, only through Him. A lot of folks are doing their own thing, whether it is by good works, trying to earn your way to heaven, going through the Pope, bishops or priests won't cut it, it's only through the shed blood on Calvary that covers all of mankind's sins that we can go to

See Combs, page 5A

Just the facts

Dear Editor,

For the benefit of Ms. Holsapple and Mr. Allen, who mistakenly believe that the Japanese did not invade the U.S. because civilians had guns, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor under the mistaken impression that if they destroyed the U.S. Pacific fleet the U.S. would not contest Japanese dominance of the Far East. Japan never intended to invade the U.S. homeland. Gun nuts like to quote Japanese Admiral Yamamoto as saying: "I would never invade the United States. There would be a gun behind every blade of grass." They use this quote to support the absurd claim made by people like Holsapple and Allen. Actually, there is no record of Admiral Yamamoto ever saying any such thing. See Factcheck.org, a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, Annenberg School For Communications, University of Pennsylvania. Of course right wingers will tell you that the people at Factcheck are a bunch of flaming liberals because they challenge lies told by people like Rush Limbaugh, but if you check for yourself you will find that Factcheck criticizes comments from the entire political spectrum, including President Obama.

Charles Cheves



A no win tax

Dear Editor,

From June 2013 through June 2014, Union County collected \$1,315,858.56 from the local 3 percent sales tax on gasoline alone. County and city collected \$877,239.04, while the schools collected \$438,619.52. Under the proposed Transportation Act of 2015, the county, city, and schools will lose this portion of local option sales tax that is presently used at discretion of local governing authorities once the present splost tax ends. If this Act becomes law, any local excise tax on gasoline imposed by local authorities will be directed specifically toward roads, bridges, repairs, etc., after the expiration of present splost taxes.

Under the proposed law, counties can impose 3 cents per gallon on gas without voter approval, as can cities. Example: Union County can impose 3 cents on a gallon of gas; Blairsville can impose 3 cents on a gallon of gas. Any gas sold in the city will have 6 cents of taxes per gallon; any gas sold outside the city will be 3 cents per gallon less. Home rule by cities and counties allow this, without an intergovernmental agreement on excise taxes.

Reminder, the Act now calls it an excise tax, not a sales tax.

With voter approval, county and city can raise an extra 3 cents each per gallon (over and above the 3 cents without voter approval), per

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Wake up call

Dear Editor,

Recorded incompetent, partisan and lawless actions by the Obama administration over "his watch" of the last six years should be a wake-up call for all Americans. These events show just how vulnerable our country is to an administration that acts at will without moral or legal accountability. This is a frightening revelation to those of us who thought we lived in a country protected by the checks and balances of a three branch government controlled by our much touted Constitution. Given the disinterest shown by American voters and our toothless Congress, this is a harbinger of just how quickly our freedoms can be defeated by a "Monarchal" administration. Even more frightening is that some fifty-plus million voters of all races, religions, education levels and walks of life believed Obama would be the epitome of the American Messiah and thus elected him to the presidency, not once but twice. Instead, Obama is proving to be "the fox in the chicken house!"

His intent should have been apparent to any objective, informed and thinking person even before his first election. His campaign words and his presidential actions show beyond doubt he has disdain for our American way of life and much more allegiance to Islam than to Western cultures. But why should

See Fiser, page 5A

Papa's Travels

As I advance in years I like to compare my life to the life of Columbus Cummings. We both had two sons and both had careers in agriculture. We both enjoyed seeing new places and experiencing new things. However, during Papa's early years, life was much more difficult. Traveling was particularly difficult. During World War II, Papa was actively engaged in farming. So, the Draft Board skipped over him when his number came up for the draft. He was told the country needed his cotton more than him. He was at home; however, things were extremely difficult for the young family during the winters.

So, after the cotton was harvested in early October, Papa hitched a ride to Phil Campbell where he caught a train to Miami, FL. Papa's older brother, Pickens, secured a job for him milking cows on a large dairy just north of Miami. Papa worked for just over a month when he received word that his youngest son, Bud, was sick with pneumonia. It was difficult to even send a message in those days. Granny had to send a relative 20 miles to Russellville where the nearest phone was located. That relative called the operator in Miami. The operator found someone to take the message out to Papa at the dairy.

Papa had very little money because he was sending it home to Granny and his two sons. So, he had to hitchhike his way from Miami to Phil Campbell. It took him more than a week. By the time Papa got home Bud was much better and on his way to recovery. Papa vowed to never leave his family alone again. He said, "We always had plenty of food. We just never had any money".

Papa also worked harder than I ever thought about. He owned a 300-acre farm in North Alabama that he cleared by hand. The whole farm was in trees when he purchased the land. Papa told me that he and Granny were just married when a man came to see his daddy. This fellow was a banker and storeowner in Phil Campbell. He told his friend Lon that he had a piece of property that the Cummings boys needed to buy. So, a deal was negotiated and Papa, Pick, Clay and Hollis WeHunt each purchased 80 acres of timber from this man. The land was purchased on credit as Papa termed it.

Papa and Granny cut the timber with a crosscut saw. Then they plowed and planted their crops around the stumps. Papa said he had a cleared field in 5-6 years. Over the next few years Papa paid for his land with money he made cutting timber and planting cotton. Then quietly Papa purchased the property each of his brothers had purchased in the original agreement. Papa told me that he had invested \$8,000 in the origi-

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Take 5 with Joe Scerbo

This week's Take 5 is with Joe Scerbo, Co-Owner of The Hair People. Joe has been involved with the Chamber for numerous years in many capacities. He currently serves as a Chamber Ambassador, and has previously been selected as our Business of the Quarter. Additionally, he is credited as one of the founders of the Mountain Networking Referral Group, a business leads group that generates thousands of dollars annually for their members.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



1. What is your job title and what do you do at The Hair People?

I am the co-owner, with my wife Sandi, of The Hair People located here in Blairsville next to Pat's Hallmark. Other than keeping the girls (and Gene) happy, I manage the administrative duties namely paying the bills, doing the books and keeping the shop functional.

2. Tell us a little bit about your background. Where did you work before opening The Hair People?

I am a "half-back" born and raised in Massachusetts, spent 30+ years in Florida and back to "God's Country" Blairsville. Sandi is from Blairsville. I spent 8 years in the USAF, and graduated from USF as an Electrical Engineer. I worked at General Electric for 13 years, and then became Regional Vice President with Primerica for 13 years. Since leaving the corpo-

See Williams, page 6A

Oh, Nuts!

I recently laid eyes on an interesting internet post on the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center website. It was a question posed to their expert they've dubbed "Mr. Smarty Pants". The question came from a fellow resident of the North Georgia Mountains. She asked Mr. Pants what plants would do well in her new "forest food garden". She wanted more specifically to know which edible fruit, nut, berry, herb and creepers would be best for this reddish, clay-like soil.

Well I wasn't familiar with this type of garden, and my curiosity was peaked. Technically speaking, forest gardening is a low-maintenance sustainable plant-based food production and agro-forestry system based on woodland ecosystems, incorporating fruit and nut trees, shrubs, herbs, vines and perennial vegetables which have yields directly useful to humans. Yeah, I didn't understand most of that jargon, either.

Easier to understand, forest gardening, in general, has three primary practical intentions: 1. High yields of products such as food, fuel, fiber, fodder, fertilizer, 'farmaceuticals' and fun; 2. A largely self-maintaining garden; 3. A healthy ecosystem. I could get into gardening with these goals in mind, couldn't you?

Edible forest gardening is not necessarily gardening in the forest. It is gardening "like" the forest. You don't need to have an existing woodland if you want to forest garden, though you can certainly work with one. Forest gardeners use the forest as a design metaphor, a model of structure and function. It is a fascinating concept, which I would encourage you to Google if you have any interest in a different and unique conception of gardening. Even if you don't want to raise your garden to these lofty objectives, you'll at least be interested in hearing the answer Mr. Pants shared with the Newbie Forest Gump(tion).

In our "neck of the woods", our edible fruits are the Eastern Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*); Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*); Muscadine Grape (*Vitis rotundifolia*); American Plum (*Prunus americana*); Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*);

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