

Opinions

Everybody has one

A prayer for the ages

One of the most humbling experiences in life is bowing your head to give thanks, ask for forgiveness or launch a prayer for someone in need.

I'm living proof of the benefit of prayer. Many, many prayers have kept me here on this Earth. I almost died in 2009, but I'm proud to say, I'm still here.

I had a very near brush with death. I had less than a 5 percent chance of survival. People who came to visit me in the Ronnie Green Heart Center in Gainesville asked me what they could do. I replied that it was my wish that they put me on their prayer list.

For the first 10-12 days I was in ICU, I was given morphine, somewhat similar to a Hospice patient. They wanted to make me comfortable in my final days. Nevertheless, my constant request for my friends and family to put me on their prayer lists paid dividends.

After 12 days, Dr. Anita Bhandiwad, my cardiologist, came in and had some news for me. In an unbelievable turn of events, my body was on the rebound. However, I would still need a new aortic valve.

I've conversed many times with Dr. Bhandiwad, who now practices in St. Louis, MO. She told me that I was the most critical patient she had ever treated that made it to a post-surgical doctor's visit.

She told me that God had a plan for me. That without divine intervention, she would not be there sitting and talking with me. I thanked her for helping save my life. I thanked God for putting her in the right place at the right time.

I spent 49 days in Intensive Care. Dr. Bhandiwad, Dr. Daniel Winston (my heart surgeon), Dr. John Gott, Dr. Jeffrey Marshall, Dr. Gary Minkiewicz and many, many other health care professionals saw me through the worst crisis in my life.

Somehow, I feel that God put all of these healthcare professionals in the right place at the right time.

As Dr. Bhandiwad prepared to leave for St. Louis, she told me that in choosing a new cardiologist, I had many options. She made a recommendation to me, that Dr. James Varnell, who has a practice in Blairsville, would be an excellent choice.

She was right, and now, my confidence remains here in Blairsville, as Dr. Varnell is one of the most gifted cardiologists I've ever met.

All this to say, as I sat in First Baptist Church of Blairsville last week, soaking in the National Day of Prayer ceremonies, I thought about Dr. Bhandiwad, Dr. Winston, Dr. Varnell

See Duncan, page 5A

County Finances

Q. What is the County's current financial position?

A. As it always has been, Union County is in excellent financial condition. The auditors have been in our County daily for the past four weeks and will probably be here another four weeks. Their final audit report is usually ready sometime between June and August, and we expect it to be a totally clean audit as it has been for years.

Q. What is the County debt? We heard a rumor that the County has never paid off the SPLOST II debts from 2008.

A. This is absolutely UNTRUE as are most of the uninformed comments coming from the Internet. Union County fully paid off all debts (\$5 million) from the 2004-2008 SPLOST II on time and as planned with the final payment being made August 1, 2009.

SPLOST III began March of 2009 and the county bonded \$5 million dollars to cover the cost of part of the SPLOST III projects. The county puts back this payment monthly to cover the yearly bond payment and this debt will be paid in full at the end of our current SPLOST III program in March 2015.

Q. Are there any other debts associated with SPLOST?

A. There is only one and that is the Union County Community Center. (\$5.5 million) This facility was originally scheduled to be paid for with a USDA 20-year low interest loan from stimulus funds. However, once the County began the design process, we saw that the red tape and additional cost that would be involved with using a USDA loan and building a project with federal stimulus guidelines, would be cost prohibitive.

Q. Did you change the financing method in order to complete the Community Center?

A. Yes. We made the decision to stop the USDA financing process dead in its tracks because of its complexity and tremendous extra cost. Knowing the value of this project to our economic development future, we chose to fund the cost for the project with future SPLOST IV proceeds. This will save us a tremendous amount in interest payments since we will be able to pay this debt off in only 10 years instead of 20 years. In addition to saving us

See Paris, page 5A

"BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD."

PSALMS 33:12



NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

MAY 3RD

What's in a name?

Have you ever wondered about the reputation of a family name? What were the personalities of your ancestors? What were their likes and dislikes? How did they interact with other people? My grandmother, Delphia Adams' maiden name was Baker. Her father was Charlie Newton Baker. He farmed and logged for a living. He loved to Fox Hunt with a large pack of dogs. Charlie's grandfather was Hiram Baker. Hiram migrated to Alabama from North Carolina. Hiram actually spent some time living here in Union County. He is listed as living in Union County, Georgia in the 1850 census.

Hiram's ancestors came out of Pennsylvania. Hiram's fourth great grandfather was Robert Baker Sr. Robert came from a line of at least three generations of gunsmiths. Sometime early in the 1700s Robert was called to England by Queen Anne to manufacture arms for the Queen's Army. Robert came back to America and sometime around 1719 he acquired 200 acres of land at the confluence of Pequea Creek and the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania where he built a gunsmith shop and began making rifles for the people of that area of Pennsylvania. Robert and his son Caleb were some of the first gunsmiths in America. The rifles which were being made at this mill were called Baker Rifles. These rifles were in the style of what we now call a Kentucky Long Rifle. We don't know the name of the inventor of the Kentucky/Pennsylvania Rifles. However, we know that Robert Baker was one of the first to make these types of rifles in the Lancaster area of Pennsylvania.

Robert died in 1728 and his sons took over the family business. When the Revolutionary War began, the English came to the area and forced Caleb and his brothers to make bullets for the British Army. The British didn't

See Cummings, page 5A

Improving credit

Good credit often paves the way for success in your business and personal life. Lenders analyze your credit score to determine whether or not to approve business loans, home mortgages, car loans and personal loans. A higher score indicates that you are more likely to repay your loan and therefore you can benefit from lower rates and greater loan amounts. Because your credit score has such a great impact on your financial well-being, this week I want to review the basics of your credit score and tips to help keep it high.

Credit scoring companies generally look at five areas and use a model to create a credit score. These are your payment history, the amounts of money you owe, the length of your credit history, the types of credit used and any new credit you have. An installment loan for home, auto or boat that is paid back over time is a major component in computing credit score. Credit cards also often play a big role in your credit history. The following are a few tips relating to credit cards: When looking for a card, try to find one that reports to all three of the credit bureaus. Use credit cards lightly. Building up big balances in a short time can hurt your score. Always pay your bills on time, as late payments play a major role in driving down your score. Contact your creditors as soon as you know you will have trouble paying on time. Try to work out a payment and negotiate with them to keep at least a portion of the late notations off of your credit report. If you have existing debt, pay off cards with the highest interest rates first. Check your card limits. It may appear that you are maxing out your card each month. Creditors like to see a gap between the amount of credit you are using and your available credit. Dust off that old card and use it for a few months. Idle cards do not help your score. Don't open several accounts in a short period. Adding accounts too rapidly might send up a red flag. Finally, remember that closing an account does not remove it from your report. Old negatives that exist on your credit report can show up years later when applying for a loan or asking for a line of equity.

Are you ready to check your current score? Because your credit report constantly changes, it is important to review your information every year to check its accuracy. Due to a federal law, you can get a free copy of your credit report once yearly from each of the three credit bureaus. Errors found on your credit report should be reviewed, resolved and removed if possible. Call (877) 322-8228 (toll free) or go online to www.annualcreditreport.com. Request the Annual Credit Report Form from

See Garner, page 5A

Pride Deceives

One of the greatest problems of our generation is the sin of pride. Sinful pride says "you can't get along without me." In fact, the prideful person is hard to get along with, because he thinks he's impossible to get along without.

Pride deceives.

The cemetery is filled with indispensable people. The preacher in Proverbs says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). I heard about a husband and wife meeting with a marriage counselor. The husband wanted a divorce. The counselor said, "Now, I see that your wife has helped you quit smoking, drinking and gambling. She has taught you how to dress properly, how to invest your money, appreciate good music and to enjoy ballet. Your problem seems to be that you are rebelling against all these changes and you are just bitter at your wife."

The husband said, "Oh, no!" "I like all the changes but to be truthful I feel too good to live with this plain woman!"

One young fellow was going all out to impress his date. He informed her that he could trace his roots back to royalty. She was fed up with his arrogance and replied, "I bet your ancestor was King Kong."

If you notice people who are singing their own praises are always off key.

One of the scariest things today is the pride and arrogance of some of our leaders in Washington, D.C.

It seems to me that a lot of them have quit serving and we are paying them just to run eternal re-election campaigns. If we don't wake up and get fed up with their pride and arrogance our nation will eventually vomit itself to death.

See Parris, page 5A

Agriculture

Agriculture is the leading industry in Georgia's vibrant economy. From peaches to poultry and from cotton to timber, Georgia is home to a larger variety of agricultural industries than almost any other state. I'm proud to represent such hardworking Americans and I will continue to make decisions that strengthen our agricultural economy while also protecting its legacy.

I believe there is critical need to protect our nation's food sources from widespread contamination and outbreaks without compromising our nation's farmer and food processors, but the legislation that was signed into law in 2011 is not one that I could support. This law still needs funding before it can be fully implemented and I support effort to block its funding.

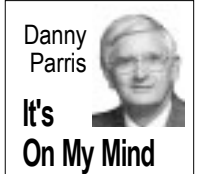
I originally supported the food safety bill that was passed by the Senate HELP Committee in 2010 because I believed it was a commonsense approach to updating our food safety and surveillance system. Once this bill came to the Senate floor and was amended, I could no longer support it and vote against its final passage.

The bill passed by the Senate HELP Committee would have modernized our outdated food safety and surveillance system, which had failed the American public by allowing events such as the salmonella outbreak at the Peanut Corporation of America plant in Blakely, Ga., to perpetuate unchecked. The bill would have improved inspections, records access and certification of large production food facilities. The provisions of the bill are scalable for small food producers and even give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to exempt producers considered to be a lower risk.

I took great care to ensure that the bill passed by the HELP Committee keeps the Food and Drug Administration off of the farm and does not affect small farmers or their ability to sell their products at roadside stands or farmers markets. The bill does nothing to regulate agriculture, as that is the responsibility of the USDA.

Contrary to widespread rumors, this legislation did not make gardening at home illegal or criminalize sharing homegrown vegetables with family, friends or neighbors. Additionally, there is no language banning dietary or nutritional supplements.

When the bill passed by Senate HELP Committee came to the floor, Senate Democrats amended in ways that I could not support because the changes would place small growers in Georgia at a disadvantage, among other things. I voted against final passage.



Danny Parris
It's On My Mind



Mickey Cummings
Around The Farm



Charles Duncan
Straight Shooting

Letters To the Editor

Respect the Editor

I was one of those who got an e-mail explaining the editor's position on the tone and direction of letters to the editor. In retrospect my letter was more towards veterans, I guess, than it was to the editor and truthfully it was rather harsh. But what I got out of Mr. Duncan's e-mail was respect for his judgment.

I think Mr. West picked a winner and I vote we keep him!

The May 2nd, Opinions spoke about politically correct. What I stated in last week's letter was that PC kills GI's. Kind of an "inside" observation perhaps, but still true, nevertheless.

Mr. Duncan referred to us all as Americans. And we are, or used to be, perhaps. Politically correct has crept in to our concept of "American." Multiculturalism and diversity are now a politically correct part of our culture. Diversity is often referred to as our strength by some of the more progressive thinkers. However non-revisionist history will tell that our nation became great by the assimilation of cultures to make one strong, and unified America. Diversity is fast becoming our downfall.

Patrick Buchanan explains this in great detail in his book *Suicide of a Superpower* and adds a suffix to the title: *Will America survive to 2025?* And of course 'We' will if the 'People' engage the process instead of watching it pass by. 'We the People' created the Constitution that kept this nation strong for 224 years and it will be 'We the People' who make it strong again.

Zeb Blanchard

Media cover-up?

Dear Editor,

J.Q. Adams III (letter March 28) gave readers his assessment of "Our guy" Sgt. Bales and Major Hasam (evidently not 'our guy'), both charged with mass killings - Bales, 17 Afghans and Hasam, 13 American soldiers in Texas.

While Mr. Adams "certainly (does) not condone what Bales did, he offered up a sympathetic explanation for his actions: "he served three tours in a war zone and received a traumatic brain injury."

While Adams continues, "we have this Muslim psychiatrist who was state side in a nice safe office who murders 13 American soldiers while screaming "Allah Akbar," and still hasn't stood trial.

For that matter, neither has Bales and it is very likely that he never will. The actions of both Americans were beyond comprehension, although it must be fairly noted that Bales left his base during the night, entered a home in a nearby village while the inhabitants (mostly babies and children) were asleep, opened fire without warning and killed 17.

We have not been informed of Bales' religious affiliation and do not know whether he screamed an equivalent to "Allah Akbar."

Bales was not content with merely shooting his victims, he also set fire to their bodies and later attempted to conceal their remains with blankets. That, in itself would seem to indicate that he knew exactly what he was doing. The public has learned the intriguing fact that soldiers at this base often leave at night, with or without permission. Why no media follow-up?

Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

Bell ringing Union County Historic Courthouse



For information on bell ringing in honor or memory, call (706) 745-5493.

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West
Owner / Publisher
Justin Owenby
Advertising Director

Charles Duncan
Editor
Janice Boling
Staff Writer
Todd Forrest
Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Website: www.nganews.com
E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com
Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514



Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TC, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card.
Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830; Location: 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, GA