

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Election Day

The day of decision approaches and many votes are still out there to be had. I tell you this so the politicians seeking elected office won't think they've already got their respective elections in the bag.

You see, I'm one of those voters that waits until Election Day to cast my ballot.

I'm not a fan of Early Voting. In my years of covering elections, the Early Voting process has changed the way we cast ballots and elect our leaders.

Over the last several years, Early Voting has decided many elections before Election Day.

I don't agree with that. I believe in the old school way of electing our government leaders.

It made those running for office work harder. They didn't have a good feel for the election until all the votes were in.

My favorite all time politician was none other than my Uncle Harlan Duncan, the long-time sheriff of Union County.

More often than not, my Uncle Harlan was unopposed on the ballot. Democrats and Republicans strayed away from that political race.

Still, my Uncle Harlan, a Democrat, went door-to-door soliciting the votes of the good people of Union County.

His logic, "you have to watch out for those write-in votes."

Today, politicians use mailers, advertisements and volunteers who walk in the highway median holding up their political signs.

Rarely do politicians make eye-to-eye contact with the people whose votes they hope to capture.

Nope, they just put their names on the ballot and hope for the best. The race that reflects that logic most is the race to succeed Dr. John Barge as state school superintendent.

Nine Republicans and six Democrats signed up for the honor of trying to fill the vacant seat of Dr. Barge, who is running for governor on the Republican ticket.

In this race, the art of campaigning is no where to be seen unless you watch the former GOP Chair of Gwinnett County campaign. Sharyl Dawes, a retired educator, has beat a path to the mountains in search of a making contact with the people.

She's campaigned in Union and Towns that I know of personally. She tells you that she's not job jumping, she's not using this election to seek higher political office in the years ahead. Her campaigning efforts have her leading the polls in that race, as well it should.

My point is, finally we have a statewide candidate that actually cares about our mountain vote. That's what makes me vote for a candidate. I like to look a candidate in the eye.

My Daddy was neither a Democrat or Republican. No, my Daddy was a free agent. He voted the person based on their agenda and their personal convictions.

When it's all said and done, going to the polls and guessing which one to choose from isn't the best game plan. Get to know these candidates and what they stand for.

I hear so many people talk about the fact that they will not vote for a Democrat or a Republican. Folks, for the most part, those are the only two choices we have.

I encourage you to be a free agent and vote for the person. Of course if you're going to make a difference in this year's local election, the only choice you have is the Republican Primary.

With that in mind, I encourage you to get out and make a difference on Election Day.

Please get out and let your vote be counted on Election Day.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Passing of the Porch

Today my mind wandered back about 25 years ago when I was visiting Mr. Jay Lance. As we sat on his porch on a beautiful, warm spring day he said, "Preacher," "I have always wanted two things in life: A wide front porch where I could sit in a rocking chair, prop my feet on the banisters, and not be bothered by someone wanting to get by me; they would have plenty of room to walk behind me; the second thing I wanted was a well with good water." He certainly had a good wide porch but his well water didn't turn out very good.

Remembering that conversation I found myself drifting back to my childhood days when I enjoyed sitting on the porch with my dad, mom, sisters and brothers. In the summer, sitting on the porch, we would shell peas, shuck corn, string beans, peel peaches and apples, chop cabbage, clean blackberries and prepare food for the winter for our family of eight.

Our front porch was a place of activity. The porch had a large swing suspended from the beaded ceiling. It was occupied in the summer months, both day and night. Occasionally, the chains on the swing would get dry where they hung from the hooks and would make a terrible scraping noise. However, a "glob of lard" left over from the winter would silence the noise. The porch had several chairs for visitors and also a wooden barber's chair that customers sat in while my dad cut their hair at 25 cents a head. With four sons, Dad got a lot of practice on our heads. I always dreaded those early haircuts when Dad used those old hand clippers that pulled out almost as much hair as they cut.

During my dad's leisure time he occupied himself by carving monkeys out of peach seeds, which he sold to the tourists that visited the Tennessee Copper Company where he was employed. He finally sold enough monkeys at 50 cents apiece to buy a set of electric clippers. Boy, was I ever glad. The front porch also served as a beauty salon where my mom and two sisters would take turns cutting each other's hair and putting in home permanents.

The front porch was the place where we discussed theology with the neighbors and revival preachers that visited the community. Not only did preachers frequent the front porch, but we also had our share of peddlers to come calling. They would lay out

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It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

Q. I think I may have registered to vote in the past. How can I find out for sure?

A. You can either call the Registrar's office (706) 439-6016 or you can go online to check your registration status at <http://mvp.sos.state.ga.us/>.

Q. What is the MVP?

A. This stands for "My Voter Page." It gives Georgia voters the opportunity to view their specific sample ballot, find their early voting and Election Day polling locations, check their voter registration status and track the status of their absentee ballot. Now all of this information will be available on mobile devices through the Apple and Android platforms. To access the apps, search for "GA Votes" in the app store.

Q. Am I allowed time off from work to vote?

A. If your work schedule would prevent you from voting in person while the polls are open, you have the right to take time off from work (up to two hours) in order to vote. You have to give your employer reasonable notice of your need to take time off and your employer has the right to specify which hours you get to take. To avoid problems taking off from work, remember that early voting is available at the Registrar's Office in the Courthouse at 65 Courthouse Street, Blairsville.

Q. Can I bring voting literature to the polls?

A. Yes. You can take written or printed election materials with you as long as they're for your own use. You're not allowed to show or distribute these materials to anyone else within 150 feet of your polling place, and you're not allowed to wear campaign clothing, stickers, or buttons in your polling place unless you cover them up.

Q. What if I am disabled? Will I be able to vote?

A. You have the right to an accessible polling place and an accessible voting machine. All Union County polling places and machines are handicap accessible.

You have the right to have anyone you choose assist you as long as the person is not your employer, an agent of your employer, or an officer or agent of your labor union.

If you are over 75 or need assistance in voting due to a disability, you may ask a poll worker to be given priority.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor ...

Enough education

Dear Editor,

"The average American in 1940 had an 8th grade education. The post-war prosperity of this country was built by eighth graders. Eighth grade America won the Second World War and then made that big, post-war 1950s prosperity. Now we stay in school twice as long, have twice as much attention from school teachers - and for no purpose. The longer you keep people in education, the less advancement there is. If you pretend that college is universal, it becomes middle school. If everybody goes to college, it's middle school. That's what it is, that's what it will be. If you take away so many people's most productive years, it leads to later economic decline, later family dissolution. It has all kinds of consequences. The education that matters is still K through 8 because if you screw up K through 8, you can spend the next 20 years trying to play catch-up and it doesn't really make any difference. And that's what I'd like to see. I'd like to see a stronger, telescoping education. I'd like to see a return back to the spirit of single-town school districts and I'd like to see American education delivered out of the hands of the present educational Establishment. Common Core does none of those things - which is why it's to me part of the problem, not the solution." — Mark Steyn

Would someone — anyone — please show me where, in the Constitution, the authority lies for the creation of the Department of Education and its \$100 billion yearly budget?

Article 1, Section 8, "enumerates" the 13 - only 13 - "duties" of the "federal" government. Education isn't among them. (For that matter, neither is health "care," retirement, "the environment, the Patriot Act, the NSA, Homeland "Security")

Of course, Liberals/Progressives/Democrats ignore the Constitution because, as their President said, that Document is "just words."

O'Obama raised the DoE's yearly budget to \$100 billion with a built-in increase of 8 percent. (In 2008, it was \$50B).

It's way past time to defund the DoE and to return that money to the 50 States.

The tentacles of the DoE would be severed. "Common Core" would be cut off - as would the armed "Enforcement Division" of the DoE.

(You didn't know that the DoE has an armed Enforcement Division under the aegis of the Inspector General?)

Each State would immediately glean \$2 billion to "improve education."

Each State would decide for itself how to

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Let your voice be heard

Dear Editor,

IMPEACH OBAMA! This man took an oath as president of the United States to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." This man is blatantly attacking the second amendment right to keep and bear arms. He is doing everything in his power to break America down. If you agree with this opinion all Americans should voice their opinion by contacting local media, newspaper and elected officials with the simple comment to impeach Obama. Maybe the local papers will start a sign-up where "We The People" can show our solidarity about the subject to impeach Obama. We need elected officials who run America like the middle class American is forced to maintain their budget and live within their means. Act now before it's too late.

A friend of the people,
David Pickrell

Parties don't make a difference

Dear Editor

Perhaps Charles Cheves should write the weekly comic strip for the paper. I think his comments and misinformation are hilarious. He like so many in his party are awfully sure of what isn't so. For example Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg is not a Republican. Nor is he a Democrat. He is a registered Independent. However, if you follow his politics, he clearly leans far to the left. He is spending millions of dollars to support Democratic politicians and to oppose Republican politicians. He has announced publically and in writing that he feels that no American should be able to own or possess firearms. *Time Magazine* did an in depth interview with Mr. Bloomberg which clearly showed which side he is on. He understands that the American citizens will never give up their second amendment rights without a fight so he is spending millions of his dollars chipping away at the second amendment just as a small man with an ax can fell a mighty oak tree. One little chip at a time until it falls. Does Mr. Cheves consider abolishing the second amendment a reasonable request?

As for the accomplishments of the Democratic party let's start with Social Security. Yes it was created under President Roosevelt a Democrat. Then it was taken out of the Trust Fund and placed in the general fund by President Johnson a Democrat. As a result of this action both parties of our government have been spending our Social Security like a drunken sailor. Under president Clinton, a Democrat, up to 85 percent of Social Security can now be taxed. Vice President Gore, a Democrat, was the deciding vote. Jimmy Carter, also a Democrat approved paying Social Security to immigrants at age 65 even though they never paid a dime into the program. But now that the Democratic party has all but guaranteed that

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Them's the Two Meanest Boys

I have told you before about my family's politics, as a reminder, many in the family were staunch Republicans until WWII. Just prior to the war and during the depression my grandfather and his brothers threw their support to FDR. Papa always said, "Hoover got us into the depression and Roosevelt led us out of the depression and through the war." But, most of the family on my grandmother's side were still staunch Republicans. Clifford Hyde wouldn't vote for relatives that ran on the Democratic ticket. Clifford's wife, Effie Franks Hyde, was the same way. I believe to carry the Franks name meant that you were Republican.

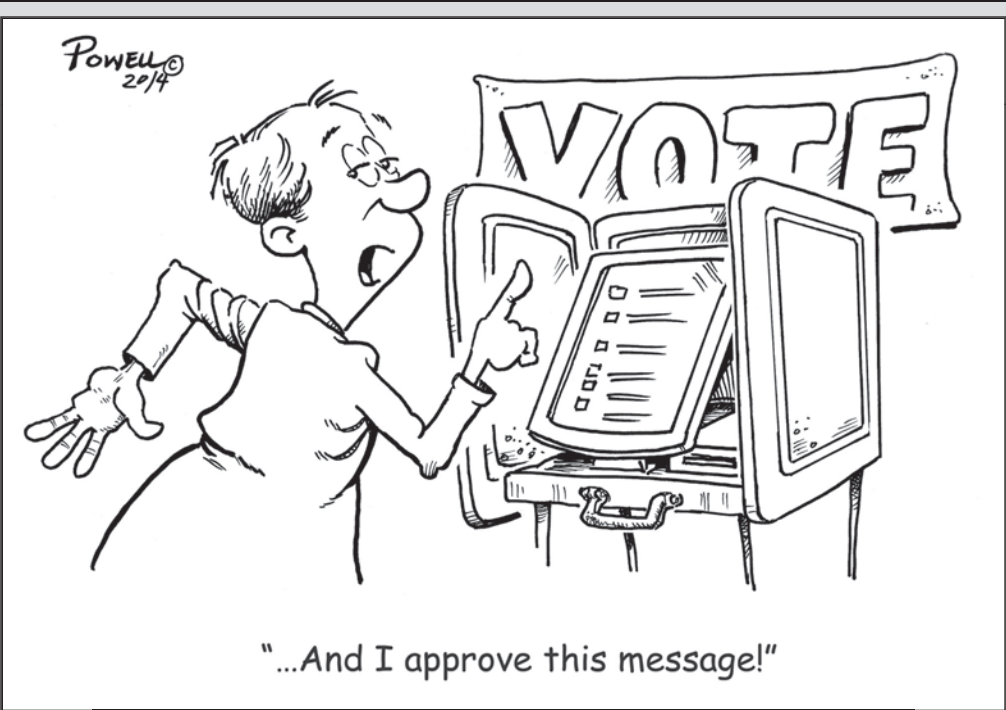
Luther Franks was a distant relative of Effie and therefore also related to my grandmother, Glenna Hyde Cummings. Luther owned a little country store on the banks of Cummings Creek. The store was located on the road to Phil Campbell. When my father was a little boy his family were regular customers of Luther and Evie Franks. Daddy said, "We loved to aggravate Luther. So, we'd go into his store and ask to borrow his hat. Bud would always readjust the band on the hat to make it bigger or smaller than it was supposed to be and then give it back to Luther. We'd always laugh when Luther would put the hat back on because it would fall down over his ears or it would sit right on top of his head."

Luther was only 5 feet tall so sometimes Uncle Bud would use a long stick and place the hat on the top shelf in the store. Luther would spend the next 20 minutes walking around looking for his hat. When he would ask Dad or Bud about the hat, the boys would tell him they had not seen the hat, after which Luther would exclaim, "Evie, them's the two meanest boys whatever was." Aunt Evie Franks would wrap her arms around Dad and Uncle Bud and say, "Luther, these boys are little angels".

Toward the end of the war and after Dad and Uncle Bud became wise to the ways of politics they found another way to aggravate Uncle Luther. The two boys knew Luther was a staunch Republican. They also knew he was not a fan of Roosevelt or Mr. Truman. One day the boys rode with Papa to Phil Campbell and as usual they stopped in at the store. Uncle Luther came out to fill up the old truck. When the truck was filled Papa paid Luther a whopping \$2 for the gas and began to drive away from the store. When the truck had traveled about 20 yards from the store Dad stood up in the back of the truck and yelled, "Luther Franks looks just like Harry Truman." Luther reached down and grabbed a rock and let it sail toward the old truck. The rock never made it far enough to make contact, but, it scared my Dad none the less. Thereafter, Uncle Luther kept a pile of rocks at the gas pump.

Each time Papa would stop Luther would

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Welcome Yvette Estevez

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is delighted to welcome Yvette Estevez as the newest addition to our growing team. Yvette will serve as the Chamber's Office Administrator to replace Tobie Chandler who has been promoted to a newly created Tourism Director position. Yvette was previously employed by a municipality in South Florida for nine years before relocating to Blairsville. She and her fiancé bought a home in Blairsville in 2011 and, like many, found it harder and harder to leave each time they visited. Yvette made Blairsville her full time home this past Thanksgiving Day. She loves the majestic mountains and the friendly people she has already met.

Yvette will be a valuable addition to the Chamber staff. She brings a wealth of knowledge and passion, and aspires to make a difference in people's lives for the betterment of the community. As an experienced and dedicated employee, along with her vast office administrative and customer service skill set, she will quickly become an asset to our organization. Yvette possesses a bachelor's degree in Public Administration.

Yvette says, "Doing my very best and experiencing the satisfaction of doing well has carried me to endure my goals. I draw my strength

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A Big Stretch

There was a time in my life where I considered myself intellectually flexible. With age, I find that I'm stiffer about what I find acceptable regarding politics, religion and societal behavior, on a whole. Last week, during a conversation about recent developments in Georgia law, I actually continued to shout at a dear friend, whose opinion differed from mine, "you're wrong," "you're wrong," and just a little louder, in case you missed it, "You're WRONG!" I'm not sure I've ever been that inflexible, much less so disrespectful. The problem is, I have no remorse. Unequivocally, he was wrong.

See what I mean? I'm rationally stiffening. On the other hand, I'm slowly (and I emphasize s-l-o-w-l-y) becoming more physically lithe.

Nimble is an adjective that has never been used to describe my physical prowess. Oh, I suppose for a giant person, I was a half a lap faster than immobile. And since my efforts to thwart some of that poundage, I have become a teeny bit more agile, but it is all relative. As I am about 18 months from completing six decades moving along the surface of this planet, I realize more and more everyday how much I need my body to be even more flexible than my mind.

As a little girl, I followed my Dad everywhere. I emulated his movements, his expressions and his habitual behavior. That's what little girls do with their daddies. Then, somewhere along the line, we quit imitating, we cease learning from example. Foolish.

When my dad was 92 years old, he could still stand, stiff legged, and touch the floor with his palms. That agility had something to do with amazing genes, but probably just as much to do with the fact that he had gotten down on the floor every morning for 50 years and did his exercises. I don't mean push-ups and six-pack building stomach crunches. I'm talking about stretching the body, slowly, loosening what had attempted to atrophy overnight. He didn't do it very long; about the time it took the coffee maker to brew a good pot of java.

Dad was religious about this routine. He never used any prop to help him down or to

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



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