

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Angels among us

For those who don't believe in angels, I feel for you, or as my Daddy would say, "bless your heart."
For you see, there are angels among us, I've seen them, and had the chance to see them work their magic.

Sonja Jo Freeman was an angel among us. She brought joy to the countless lives that she touched for 52 years.

One glance at her smile, and knowing the kindness in her heart, brought a smile and a warm fuzzy feeling to everyone that knew her.

For more than 19 years, Sonja was a mainstay at United Community Bank. She was at work everyday, and if she was ever late, it's because her ride didn't pick her up on time.

And if you didn't get the chance to know Sonja, pick up a copy of Carol Fleming Head's *A Sprinkling of Heaven's Dust*.

After reading *Sonja* on Page 47, you'll know everything you need to know about Sonja Freeman.

"If we were more like Sonja, we'd meet each new day with a beautiful smile, and whatever the task, go that extra mile.

"Each Friend would be special and we would feel blessed, surrounded by those we know are the best!

"And if there were hurdles, we'd not turn and run, but hit them straight on, we'd conquer each one.

"At the end of the day when our work was done, we'd look back and see special friendships and fun.

"For you see we'd feel blessed to just be a part, of a group that's so special, a group with a heart!

"If we could be more like Sonja!"

In the words of Carol Fleming Head, Sonja was a very special lady who worked everyday with the kind of dedication that delighted employers. She put all the effort she had in each task assigned her and took pride in all that she did. Her smile warmed the hearts of fellow employees every day and they felt truly blessed through her friendship.

In 2007, Sonja was voted by her peers at United Community Bank as Outstanding Employee of The Year. She was deserving of the honor because of the extra effort she put into everything she did.

About four months ago, Sonja ran out of smiles. She was tired, her body ached and it became more apparent with each passing day that this angel among us was ready to go home.

On Tuesday, May 7th, 2013, Sonja Jo Freeman went home to be with her maker. We were blessed to have our angel here for almost 53 years. She taught us life lessons, things that we'll never learn in a classroom, no, these lessons were learned only in meeting life head on, day-in, day-out.

Sonja had the prettiest smile, she had the sweetest disposition and she had a passion for life and the people around her that is unmatched by any human being.

She loved the Atlanta Braves and the Georgia Bulldogs, and she loved her favorite dog, J.T.

Sonja was a blessing to all who knew her, and she loved Union County.

So, it's pretty conclusive, Sonja Jo Freeman was an angel among us. We feel the loss, but we always have that beautiful smile to remember her by.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Freeman family.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Please Pay Attention

Facetiously, I have told folks that growing up so close to the barren hills and gulleys of Copperhill, Tennessee, our family was so poor we couldn't even pay attention. Of course, that is not true. Everyone can pay attention. The Bible uses the word consider 67 times. It means to be aware of, to learn thoroughly, to note accurately, to consider well, to perceive with the mind, think about, to understand fully. There are several different Greek words translated to consider in the New Testament, which express these various meanings, but all of them convey the fact that you must give careful attention to, or apprehend inwardly. Still ringing in my ears are those three words repeated by my teachers over the years, "Please Pay Attention." What they meant were "you had better put on your thinking cap" and "listen up." The next words were going to be mighty important. They would probably determine your status, whether you passed or failed a test; moved up a grade or stayed in the same grade; or graduated or extended your stay. I dare say, that as graduation time nears there are some students who are wondering if they paid close enough attention to their instructors over the past year. It is easier to day-dream and give attention to hobbies, girlfriends, boyfriends, music, movies, cars, sports and twenty million other things, than it is to study and prepare for finals. Not any of the preceding things are evil in themselves but - there is a time and season for all things. We simply must pay attention to the right things in the right seasons if we get the right results. In this writer's opinion, so much that is wrong in our world goes back to this basic principle; doing the wrong things, in the wrong seasons, equals the wrong results. To all of those who are celebrating graduation I congratulate and commend you for an important milestone reached. However, let me encourage you to KEEP YOUR THINKING CAP ON! For earth's sake and heaven's sake, keep thinking properly because our world needs those who consider their ways and the ways of our world. Someone has said that you are not thinking properly if: "you are looking for your glasses when you already have them on; you think

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



See Parris, page 5A

Rolling the dice

Q. We heard that the Cherokee Indians are going to build a casino in Murphy, NC. How much do you think this will affect the traffic going through Blairsville and Highway 129 North?

A. If it is a nice casino, it could have a very large impact on traffic flow. Many people from this side of the state who visit Cherokee, N.C. would probably go to Murphy instead. This would be the closest casino to Northwest Georgia and all the surrounding counties plus the I-575 corridor.

Q. Do you think it would improve business in Union County if a casino were built in Murphy?

A. That is hard to say. Certainly it could, but would it only be to purchase gas and possibly get some fast food as they pass through, or their trip would give them the opportunity to see and appreciate Union County for all we have to offer. I do not think anyone knows the answer to that question just yet.

Q. Would Union County residents be able to get jobs there?

A. We have heard as many as 600 or more jobs would be added for this project. If that is true, it could certainly offer some opportunities for some of our residents.

Q. Are there still plans to widen 129 north or did that go away when TSPLOST failed to pass?

A. The highway plans are still there, but the funding is not. So we just have to hope that if our traffic counts do increase significantly, that this highway would be given a higher priority for future funding.

Q. Do you know whether the information on the new casino is fact or fiction?

A. The information in the Cherokee Scout (Murphy, NC newspaper) definitely seems to think this project is a real possibility and it even states it could be open within a year. Personally, I would take the wait and see attitude. While economic times are improving, they are still slow and it seems difficult to believe that some group will be willing to spend many millions of dollars right now. Time will tell.

Q. Do you think casino gambling is good for a community?

A. It certainly appears to have been good for

See Paris, page 5A

4 Great Warm Weather Activities

The leaves are finally back on the trees, and the sun is starting to shine over Blairsville-Union County. For those of us who live here,

we often need to be reminded of the many fun activities that surround us during the Spring and Summer seasons. Here are just a few of the reasons visitors flock to Union County this time of year.

1. Water, Water Everywhere: Spend some time on one of our three lakes - Nottely, Winfield Scott, or Trahlyta - and choose your activity. Boating, fishing, skiing, kayaking or pedal boats make great lake activities. Don't have the right equipment or need a guide to show you the ropes? The Chamber has a variety of members that can help. If waterfalls are more your speed, we have plenty of those too. A waterfall guide can be obtained in the Chamber's Welcome Center or requested online at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com.

2. See The Sites - If you feel like you are always seeing the same parts of Union County from the same perspective, venture out a bit. Have you seen the view atop Brasstown Bald? How about the lovely countryside while

See Williams, page 5A

Quizzing the Farmers

A friend recently sent me a great article on four questions you should never ask at the Farmers Market. They are actually questions I've heard folks ask many times over the years I've been involved with the market. The first one is "Was this picked fresh this morning?" Answer:

99% - probably not. Come on, people. The market opens at 7 a.m. The farmers start setting up at 5:30 a.m. They had to get up, have a cup of coffee, drive over here. Who do you think picks in the dark? The eggs weren't laid this morning, either. The hens are still sleeping when that farmer leaves for the market. Most market produce is picked the afternoon before, and loaded up that evening to be brought to market the next morning.

Question #2. "What time do you get up?" Doesn't that depend on when their chickens crows? Oh, what if they don't have a transgender pullet? My guess is they set an alarm, or in farm circles, better known as an electronic rooster. Do you ask the mailman what time he gets up? How about your hair dresser?

Questions #3 and #4 are asked by those that feel they are privileged. For the person who gets there before the market opens, "I know I'm early, but I'm in a hurry. Would you sell me something now?" and then there are the ones who come at the end and ask "Since it's the end of market, can I get a special deal on what you got left?" Most likely answer to both of these is "No."

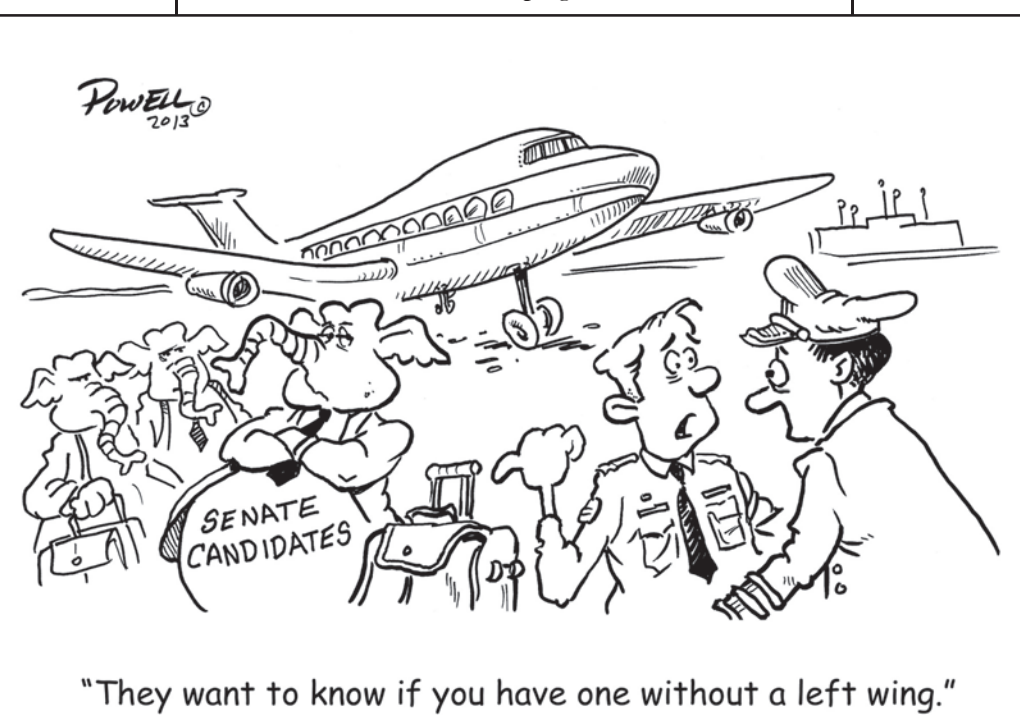
So, what are the questions you should be asking? Consider asking open-ended questions. Instead of yes or no questions like - Do you use pesticides? Or, Is your beef grass-fed? How about - How do you grow your strawberries (or corn, or tomatoes)? Or, How do you raise your beef (or chicken, or lamb)? Let the farmer tell you about what he does, most of them are more than happy to tell you all about what they do.

If you are trying a certain fruit or vegetable for the first time, ask about the best ways

See Leone, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor ... Congrats Senior Citizens

Dear Editor,
It was great to read the article in the paper about our local nursing home residents challenging the staff to a contest. The contest was to see which group would come up with the most words using the letters from the word "Brainstorming."

The residents won with more than 600 words. Speaking of exercise, they really stimulated the grey matter and had fun doing it.

I spent most of Sunday relaxing after running around all week. Reading the article, I decided to take up the challenge. I lounged on the sofa cruising back and forth through the letters.

See Owens, page 5A

A lesson learned

Dear Editor,
It was 1953. I was 11 years old and it was Christmas morning.

I almost slipped and fell running down the stairs to get to the Christmas tree because under the tree, there was a long, thin box, carefully wrapped and sporting an enormous, red bow.

That box had been lying under the tree for what seemed like years and I hadn't been allowed to go near it -- much less pick it up and shake it.

Dad handed me several other presents and made sure that I read the card on each one before I opened it.

See Mitchell, page 5A

What a great place to live

Dear Editor and people of North GA,
On April the 10th I died three times from a massive heart attack while on the way to the hospital in Gainesville.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of the EMT personnel in Union County and the helicopter pilot and crew for their efforts to keep me alive plus thanks to the people of NE Georgia Medical Center. And I thank the many people that prayed in my behalf. If not for each and every one of you, my prayers, training, knowledge, and dedication I would not be here today. YOU ARE THE BEST! NE Georgia can be proud of you and what each of you do.

From a grateful resident of Blairsville, Jerry Hall

Extremely Disappointed

Dear Editor,
We are extremely disappointed that North Georgia News chose to run a front page story regarding a baseless lawsuit filed against Young Harris College. The article, which ran for more than 40 inches, contained more falsehoods than I can begin to refute in this letter. Additionally, the paper never once contacted the College for a statement. As a good corporate citizen of this community, we expect more from our local newspaper.

This lawsuit is the latest effort by two terminated faculty members to shake the College down for money. When we refused, they threatened individual students with a lawsuit if they did not pressure the College into paying up. Now, in another attempt to have us cave in and pay, they have tried to vilify us in any media outlet that will listen. The College will not be extorted, and we look forward to defending ourselves in the appropriate forum of the courts.

Young Harris College does not condone hazing in any form. When a report of such activity was made more than a year ago, the College took immediate and proper action against it. The student who reported the incident re-enrolled at YHC and has been here all year long with no reported complaints about the College or her fellow students. It should also be noted that the student's initial complaint bears no resemblance to the outrageous activities recited in this lawsuit.

Young Harris College is always available to North Georgia News when it finds newsworthy matters to print about the College. We find it irresponsible to print the outrageous claims of a lawsuit, clearly designed to damage the College's reputation, without giving us the courtesy of providing the counterbalancing facts and information. As the College was not approached for our official statement, we have included it in full below.

"Hazing is an activity that goes against the values on which Young Harris College was founded more than 125 years ago, and it is not tolerated here - at any level. More than a year ago, we suspended the sorority mentioned in this lawsuit for violating the school's no-hazing policy, and the student now complaining and her family told us then that they were satisfied with our actions. This lawsuit contains false, sensational allegations on multiple fronts, all of which are far removed from the everyday reality we live on our campus. We look forward to addressing all these matters in the proper forum, which is the courts."

Jay Stroman
Vice President for Advancement

Minnie, Petunia and Bessie

The year 1958 was an important year because it was the year that phone lines came to the Trapptown Community. I was much too young to remember the phone lines coming to our community, but, these lines changed life forever.

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Phones allowed people to stay in better touch with each other. Minnie, Petunia and Bessie were a mother and 2 sisters that lived with each other. Minnie was a widow while Petunia nor Bessie had ever married. The ladies were my Papa's cousins by marriage. They lived an isolated life out toward the Bee Bluff above Turkey Creek. Life became particularly hard for the women after the death of Minnie's husband. John owned a nice little farm that was really too much for the ladies to work. Also, Minnie, Petunia and Bessie had a hard time keeping up with the latest community gossip until the phone lines were installed. So, my grandfather's brother, Pickens, would go to see the ladies to visit with them, give them the latest news and take them some food to eat.

One particular month in early spring had been very difficult for the women. All they had eaten was cornbread for the whole month of March. As usual Pickens showed up at their front door with fresh baked cathead biscuits, sorghum syrup, sweet potatoes, canned beets, leather breeches and a country cured ham. Petunia told Pickens he had saved their lives with all this food. Pickens left their house feeling pretty good about what he'd done.

The ladies sat down to the best meal they'd had in a month and began to eat. In fact they ate everything Pickens had brought them. They ate so much they got sick and thought Pickens had poisoned the food. Afterward, Petunia and Bessie got on the phone lines and told anyone who'd listen that Pickens had tried to poison them. By the next day Pickens' good deed had turned him into a monster about which the whole community was talking.

When Uncle Pick heard his cousins were telling everyone he had poisoned them he decided he should go and set things straight. Uncle Pick drove as close as he could get to their home and then walked for thirty minutes before getting to the Dubois home. Uncle Pick said, "Something inside told me to be careful as I walked up to the house. So, I slowed down and about 20 yards from the house I hollered out to my cousins. All of a sudden a double barrel shotgun was poked through the window and Petunia fired the thing at me." Pickens tried to explain what had happened and she shot at him again. For years afterward the sisters would fetch a gun if they saw Pickens approaching.

A couple of years later Uncle Bud became
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