

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Remembering Reece

I had a conversation last week with one of my favorite writers, Cleveland's Candice Dyer. There's probably not a bigger Byron Herbert Reece fan than Candice. She's a Reece expert and has written some incredible stories about our Mountain Poet. Most notably, a story in 1998 in the AJC. She breaks down Reece about as well as any writer who has ever attempted to do so. We talked about Reece and the legacy he left behind in the mountains. It brought back a flood of memories of when my Granny Potts (Reece's cousin) used to read to me from Reece's works. She had all his books. As I child, I listened to the words to humor Granny. Sort of like when I pretended that I loved to watch her favorite soap operas with her. *As the World Turns* and *The Doctors* may have been long-running favorites, but, they were not my cup of tea.

But, just as I grew to appreciate those soaps, I learned to enjoy the writings of Reece. Love and appreciate is probably more like it. Though Reece has been gone for 55 years, his writings will stand the test of time. His works and his legacy offer a major economic development tool for Union County. Tourists meander through our mountains just to walk the grounds where Reece worked the soil and harvested his poetry.

You don't have to be a tourist to appreciate Reece. That resource is right here in our backyard. I know that the natives already know about Reece and appreciate his work. But, I'm finding that there are a lot of folks that have made Union County their home in recent years, that really don't know about our Farmer Poet.

Those folks are lucky. It's just a short drive to the Reece Farm and Heritage Center. It's up on the Gainesville Highway - that's U.S. 129, approximately 9 miles south of Blairsville, or 1 mile north of Vogel State Park.

The center is all things Reece, from copies of his books, to historic displays of how he lived, complete with tools of the era in which he lived. It includes a Gift Shop that offers a vast array of gift selections.

If you're a poet and didn't know it, you'll find books written by or about Reece, as well as many other books of regional interest.

The Gift Shop also includes local craft items including decorative and functional pottery, jewelry, homemade soap, turned wooden bowls and trays, and hand-woven baskets. It's a weekly arts and crafts festival.

It also includes Appalachian wildlife note cards, alpaca scarves and hats, tea towels, aprons, bonnets, quilts, doilies, birdhouses, hiking sticks, photos with handcrafted frames, calico pumpkin and cloth pinecones.

It also includes denim shirts, tote bags, T-shirts, hats and shades with the Byron Herbert Reece Society logo.

I guess what I'm trying to point out here is that it's not every day that you have a Pulitzer Prize worthy writer hail from the mountains of North Georgia.

We have the distinction of being the hometown of one of the most recognized poets in the world.

The Reece Farm and Heritage Center isn't just for tourists. It's available to each and every one of the good folks calling the North Georgia Mountains as home. Stop in, check it out, and see what the world is clamoring about.

Letters to the Editor ...

Voicing concern

Dear Editor,
Be aware driving on Blairsville Downtown Square. Turning off the square to The Rogers Building has become a very dangerous place. People entering the square from the old Blue Ridge Highway don't always yield the right of way. When they don't yield and you are turning off, there is no way to avoid getting hit by another vehicle. Because it is such a short distance from the entrance onto the square, it is dangerous. It was bad enough before the new construction of flower beds, but now the distance you have to turn in is an even smaller area.

Several weeks ago I expressed my concerns about this to the Mayor of Blairsville as well as Georgia DOT and was told that nothing could be done. According to both the mayor and DOT, it was a matter of people obeying the yield sign. Well, today I was hit by another vehicle while I was attempting to make that turn, because that driver according to her, thought she had the right of way. (She was entering from the old Blue Ridge Highway).

I have worked in the Rogers Building for almost 17 years and there are apparently many drivers who believe that the person circling the square should stop to let them pull out in front of them. Because this occurs quiet often, not just to me, but anyone who frequents this area.

See King, page 5A

Hanoi Jane

Dear Editor:
I did not serve in Vietnam, but members of my family and friends did. Those veterans that served there know Jane Fonda as "Hanoi Jane" and she was guilty of collaborating with the VietCong. She assisted the VietCong in furthering the propaganda that prisoners were receiving "humane" treatment when actually they were starved, tortured and beaten routinely. During her visit to the prison camp, she was passed notes from some of the prisoners telling the truth about their treatment, but she chose to ignore them and in fact passed the notes to the camp Commandant. This resulted in further beatings, torture and deaths of some prisoners. Her negative comments regarding our Military personnel coupled with her acts during time of war borders on, if not in fact TREASON.

Now she is making a movie, playing the part of Nancy Reagan. The movie's name is "The Butler." Ronnie must be spinning in his grave.

Boycott the THE BUTLER.
Charles F. Sowers

Gardening Woes

It happens every year. When spring time rolls around I get these illusions of planting a variety of vegetable seeds and harvesting truck loads of perfect vegetables. You know vegetables that look like the pictures on the seed packages.

This year was no different. I got out the old tiller and pulverized the soil, planted beans, okra, squash, corn, peas, tomatoes, peppers, radishes and white cucumbers; I visited my garden every day looking for the first signs of broken earth to reveal life bursting forth from those seeds. Boy was I surprised and excited to see almost every seed that I placed in the ground come forth reaching up toward the sun with passion. A beautiful site!

But the rain began and several days went by before I checked out my garden. Lo and behold those beautiful plants could not be seen. Pig weeds had completely taken over my entire garden. This pig weed had gone hog wild. There were not just a few pig weed plants but I am talking government deficit numbers - trillions and trillions. I devised a plan using a cardboard and placing it between my plants and the weeds and sprayed the weeds with Round-Up. However, my plan backfired. The Round-Up killed the weeds but it also permeated the soil and killed lots of my vegetable plants. Those remaining plants survived well, but with so much rain I believe Bass or Catfish must have eaten a portion of the surviving plants.

Two rows of white-half runner beans were really doing well, but a big buck took a craving for my beans. Blight took care of my tomatoes. Chipmunks, moles, voles, ground hogs, cutting worms, bugs and unknown insects have, without my permission, freely visited my garden and satisfied their voracious appetites. My wife has been telling me for years that she doesn't believe God wants me to have a garden. She has almost convinced me.

When I add up the cost of plowing, preparing the soil with fertilizers, buying the seed and planting the seed, the squash I have been eating, probably cost me about 20 or 30 dollars a piece. As a retiree, I am not financially able to employ a military expert with an arsenal of weapons to battle my vegetable enemies.

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Building and Development Department

As part of our series on what your property taxes pay for, this week we are taking a look at our Building and Development Department. If you have any further questions you can give them a call at 706-439-6045.

Q. I remember when building permits were not required. Why did we start this process?

A. You are correct. Until 2005 building permits were not required. But because of the many building code violations we received, and many absentee homeowners not being in the county during the construction of their homes, there was a significant amount of abuse. This is one of the most important programs that was started in this county. We were one of the very few counties in Georgia that did not require building permits. Our building inspection and development department is under the direction of Randy Day, with Gavin King and Nora Lawn assisting. They do an excellent job. They are fair but thorough. Contractors work well with them and if you build a home or business in Union County, you can be assured it follows the latest building and safety codes.

Q. Exactly why are permits necessary?

A. The safety of our citizens was the main reason. Electrical codes were becoming more complicated and to adequately protect the safety of our residences, we had to not only require permits, but also require those doing the work (the contractors) be licensed. This had always been required by the state, but not enforced by the county. Also, permits are necessary to insure that any environmental laws or local ordinances are not violated by construction and to insure that state and local construction guidelines are followed. They also ensure that stair rails and decks are built safely. Proper plan designs also insured that rafter and joist spacing were secure. Safe fire escape access is insured especially in upstairs bedrooms. Enforcement of building codes protects the citizens of the county, including our children and grandchildren. It also protects property values.

Q. What kind of building projects requires a permit?

A. Union County requires a building permit for all construction projects that either (1) alter the existing footprint of a structure, (2)

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Eggs & Issues Breakfast

At the Aug. 20th Eggs & Issues Breakfast, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce welcomes Secretary of State Brian Kemp. He will speak at our 2013 Eggs & Issues Breakfast to be held on Tuesday, August 20th.

The event will take place at the Union County Community Center in Blairsville. Breakfast will be served at 7:45 a.m. followed by the keynote speaker. The event will conclude at 9 a.m.. Secretary Kemp will give an overview of the current happenings in the Secretary of State's Office including the elections calendar, Invest Georgia Exemption - a securities regulation to help small businesses in the state of Georgia, and corporations and professional licenses.

Secretary Brian Kemp, a lifelong resident of Athens, is a graduate of Clarke Central High School and of the University of Georgia, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture. Secretary Kemp served in the Georgia State Senate from 2002-2006. He has served as Secretary of State since January, 2010. Among the office's wide-ranging responsibilities, the Secretary of State is charged with conducting efficient and secure elections, the registration of corporations, and the regulation of securities.

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Fairy Dust

On my trip back to Western New York earlier this month, I visited all the old neighborhoods I lived in before I left for college at age 18. That would be about 6 different neighborhoods in a 17 mile radius, which seems like quite a few.. The first five years of my life my parents were like nomads, moving from one oasis to another. By the time I was in first grade, they had the home they always wanted to raise their family and we stayed there, around the same kitchen table, for the next 13 years.

That home was on a very large lot that had been cleared as clean as a baby's behind before construction. All the lots around it were either fields of wild flowers or wooded and the back woods led to a creek. Mother Nature was like a nurturing grandmother to my sister and me. She provided us with so many opportunities to have fun, to be creative, to explore and to learn.

The creek was our favorite summer classroom. Shallow enough to wade, we were always digging for treasures in the bed. We also got quite good at capturing salamanders, night crawlers, toads and crayfish. To this day we tease my sister about the summer she spent training baby toads. With play dough, she made a circus ring. Then she had bars and rings for the little amphibians to leap up, over and through. She even had them playing leap frog with each other. At that time I envisioned her future as a lion tamer, not the world renowned professor of music she is today.

The creek swept under a major road extension that was supported by three large cement culverts. Those tunnels underground were our caves. We met in them, ran screaming through them and used them as the path to the other side of the road where a whole other world opened up to us.

On that side of the road, cutting through the dense woods were the railroad tracks. They were active tracks and the cars would slow when traveling through this area. I suppose that they reduced speed just enough that

See Leone, page 5A

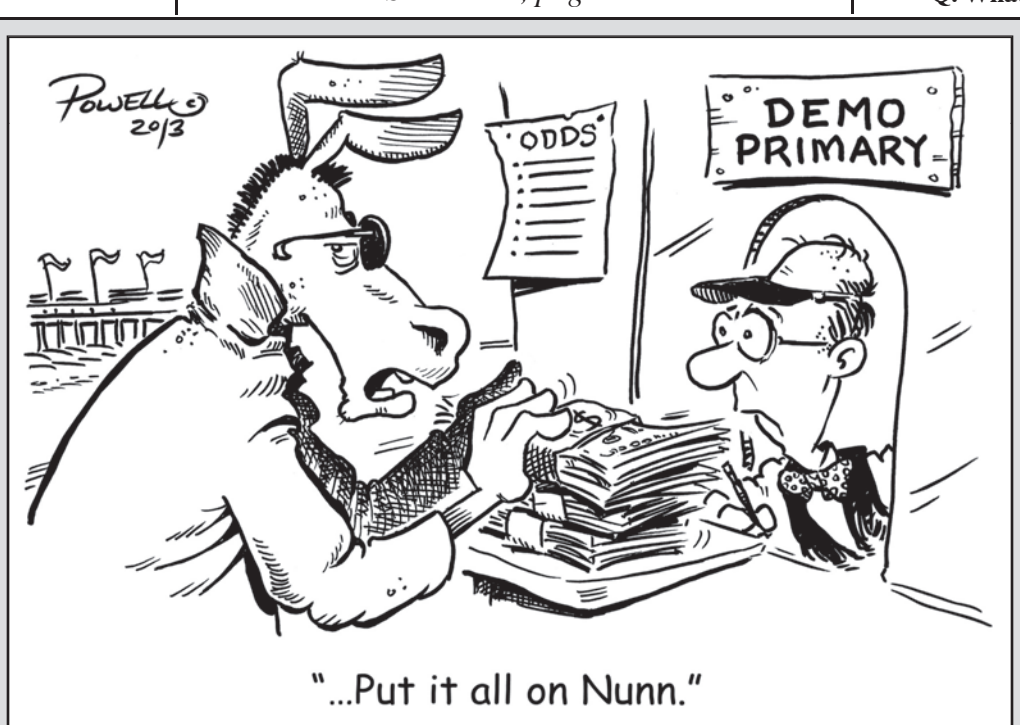
Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Traditions

Dear Editor:
I know this is a little early by far, but I wanted to give every one and especially the organizers something to consider and think about.

Halloween is just around the corner. I have to admit that I do miss the old days when the kids would come to my house and I would give out candy and seeing their eyes light up and the joy that was shared were times I will treasure forever. I use to even take their pics and some times would even hide my video camera. The expressions on their face when I would tell them to look towards the video camera. PRICELESS! Those days however are long gone and forgotten now that they have these "Halloween on the Square" things. I have to admit that I understand the protection we are all giving our kids these days and all, but still, going house to house is just as safe as well, especially if you just go to those houses and businesses and people you know. In many places, they don't even know what I am talking about when I say "Halloween on the Square" because they DO STILL go house to house. My own grandkids don't even know what I am talking about when I tell them how we use to do this. My daughter remembers well and so do I. She and her Dad and Aunt and cousins would all go together and take TRASH BAGS and in one hour alone would come back, and she would dump all of her goodies out in the

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A lesson learned

To the Editor:
BREAKING NEWS: "National Guard units seeking to confiscate a cache of recently banned assault weapons" were ambushed by elements of a para-military, Extremist faction. Military and law enforcement sources estimate that 72 were killed and more than 200 injured before government forces were compelled to withdraw.

"Speaking after the clash, Massachusetts Gov. Thomas Gage, declared that the Extremist faction, which was made up of local citizens, has links to the radical, right-wing tax protest movement.

"Gage blamed the Extremists for recent incidents of vandalism directed against internal revenue offices. The Governor, who described the group's organizers as "criminals," issued an executive order authorizing the summary arrest of any individual who has interfered with the government's efforts to secure law and order.

"The military raid on the Extremists' arsenal followed wide-spread refusal by the local citizenry to turn over recently outlawed assault weapons.

"Gage issued a ban on assault weapons and ammunition earlier in the week. This decision followed a meeting in early this month between government and military leaders at which the governor authorized the forcible confiscation of illegal

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The Grand Old Man

Hyde was originally from the Shoal Creek area of Dawsonville, Georgia. However, he migrated to Alabama sometime around 1890 and raised his family in the town of Phil Campbell. Clifford was my Dad's grandfather. He lived to the age of 96. I can remember him as a white headed old man that wore a gray Stetson hat with round wire rimmed glasses. He was less than 6 feet tall and only weighed about 150 pounds.

As Clifford aged he became known as the "Grand Old Man" of Phil Campbell. Each Saturday, Clifford visited three places in town, the Barber shop, the Pool Hall and the Old Men's bench in front of City Hall. One of his best friends was the local Chief of Police, Mr. Looney. Mr. Looney enjoyed sitting with and listening to all the old men on the Old Men's bench. He was especially fond of Clifford and anytime a still was busted the Chief of Police would bring a pint to Clifford.

As Mr. Looney aged he became a little slower and the City Council decided he needed some help. So, a young deputy was hired. The young man didn't know about the arrangement between Mr. Looney and Clifford. One Saturday my father drove 85-year-old Clifford to town. They were in the pool hall and Clifford was entertaining the younger folks with his stories. He reached into his coat pocket and pulled his flask from the pocket. He took a swig about the time the young deputy walked by the front door.

Clifford had just placed the flask back into his pocket when the deputy walked in to the Pool Hall and directly toward my great grandfather. The deputy looked at Clifford and asked him to pull the flask from his coat pocket. The old man told the deputy "The contents of my coat pocket are none of your business." The deputy reached toward Clifford's coat and the old man struck his arm with a walking cane. The deputy drew his Billy stick and my Dad jumped in between his grandfather and the deputy. Try to picture a teenage boy standing between a Deputy and an old man swinging a cane over the shoulder of my Dad. At 88 years of age the Grand Old Man was ready to fight to defend his rights. He even told my Dad, "If you would have done your part we could have given that deputy a whipping."

This past week our 4-H Wildlife Judging Team traveled to Trafalgar, Ind., to attend the National "Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program". The team earned the right by winning the Georgia contest in November. The team consisted of Holly Harkins of Woody Gap, Brooks Patterson and Daniel Kumler both of Blairsville. The contest consisted of evaluating

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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