

Opinions

Everybody has one

A proud moment

Times are hard and no one understands that now more than the Georgia Department of Transportation, Gov. Nathan Deal and every state lawmaker in Georgia.

Last week's Primary results related to the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax tells the story. "No."

That's straight from the voters' mouths as they turned back the \$7.2 billion tax increase, the largest in Georgia's history. That's a pretty big chunk of history if you've ever taken a look at that eighth grade Georgia History book (mandatory reading for Georgia eighth graders).

Gov. Deal tossed a carrot to Northeast Georgians prior to the T-SPLOST vote, declaring an end to the Georgia 400 Toll Road. Well, that road paid for itself over and over again. I wonder now that TSPLOST is defeated, if that toll road will continue to live in infamy.

The Atlanta newspaper gives the credit of T-SPLOST's defeat to the Tea Party for fighting back the tax increase. I give the credit to the hardworking people that make up the Mountains District – Tea Party members, Republicans, Democrats and Independents included.

You see, times are hard and folks know that they can't afford an increase on groceries, their utility bills, their heating oil or medical supplies. Bottom line, they can't afford an increase period. Any increase meant family decisions on whether to heat or eat.

Roger Beal sent a Letter to the Editor that didn't make it in time for the Editorial Page deadline for Letters to the Editor. However, his point was well taken.

"The TSPLOST 'no' vote makes a clear statement to government leaders, from mayors, through county commissioners, to the state house – do more with the resources you already have. Every household in Union County has learned this lesson over the past three and a half years. Citizens look hard at their needs and at what they can afford, and prioritize their purchases to avoid taking on debt. Governments must learn to do the same. Yes, the Fed can print more money, but cities, counties and states cannot. If regional leaders feel we 'must' have a new, or a widened, highway, then those leaders must decide what they will forego in order to pay for it. Voters clearly understand this principle of careful spending, and have sent the message."

Well said Roger. We hear you loud and clear.

State lawmakers and GDOT were licking their chops at the thought of another penny tax to pay for the state's transportation needs. They spent millions on an advertising campaign to promote the tax.

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Questions

Q. Do you have lots of people wanting to convert their roads from private to county maintained?

A. Yes, they really do. However, the bare facts are that without an increase in funding, there will be few if any roads that will continue to be accepted because the cost of doing this only increases.

Q. Why does it cost so much money to accept a private road into the county system?

A. We simply do not have the funding or the manpower to continue accepting new roads into the county system. Because when we do accept a road into the county system, we then have the responsibility for the mowing, paving, striping, or grading and the culvert replacement and repair. We have a few roads in the pipeline but without new funding sources others will simply have to wait.

Q. Do you have enough equipment to maintain more roads for the county?

A. We could handle a few more roads, but the main problem is labor. Our Road Dept has the same number of employees now as it did when I took office 12 years ago. We get a lot more done because of good equipment and excellent employees. However, control of the number of county employees is one reason we are able to maintain one of the lowest property tax rates in Georgia.

Q. Why are you scraping grass off the edge of Hwy. 515 and then coming right back and replanting it? This seems like a real waste of taxpayers' money.

A. First, since Hwy. 515 is a state highway, it is not the county doing this work, but Georgia Department of Transportation employees. However, we do the same type of process with our roads. Over time dirt and debris builds up on the outer edge of the highway and it forms a ridge that prevents the water from flowing off the highway. In areas where there is not much slope to the highway, it can cause water to pond up on the road creating the danger of hydroplaning or icing conditions. Occasionally, the small mound of dirt is scraped off along with the grass. Grass seed is then applied so that the area will not wash. Like patching of a road, it creates a short term appearance problem, but is a necessary part of public road maintenance.

Q. Who proof reads your Q & A column? I sometimes see punctuation errors.

A. My assistant normally looks over this document for errors. However, there are cir-

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Charles Duncan
Straight Shooting



The Burden of Burdens

David Thomas said, "A guilty conscience is the burden of burdens. It makes the soul gloomy and tempestuous. It makes death terrible, the grave a land of darkness, eternity an intolerable idea. Christianity removes this."

That's why David H. C. Read said, "there is no burden a cleansed conscience cannot bear. And there is no burden a cleansed conscience cannot understand and share."

When the great Apostle Paul stood before Felix, he did it with bold confidence because he said, "So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man" (Acts 24:16 ESV).

Are you tormented with a guilty conscience? Are you always looking over your shoulder? When you lie down at night do the skeletons in your closet make such tumultuous noise that you can't sleep? The remedy for a clear conscience is found in Proverbs 28:13: "He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (KJV).

All of us have been plagued with a guilty conscience sometime in life. Adam and Eve are prime examples that you can't cover your sin. All the latest fashions of designer fig leaves in the world cannot cover fear and guilt. Fig leaves may cover our nakedness and make us socially presentable to each other but fig leaves won't cover sins and make us presentable before God.

As some wag has said, "He that hath a clear conscience has a poor memory." Every time a police officer or highway patrolman pulls up behind you on the interstate, even though you are obeying the law, his presence causes you to shudder and have cold chills because in times past you have broken the law.

I am sure that most everyone has heard the prank Noel Coward, the playwright perpetrated on twenty of the most famous men in London. He sent to each of them a note which read: "Everybody has found out what you are doing. If I were you I would get out of town as fast as I could." According to the story all

See Parris, page 5A

Resources for the Small Business

Resources are by definition the tools that provide a reserve source of supply or support. In this week's column, I want to identify four topics that initiate a solid foundation for success in your small business and then share a few of the many online resources that exist today.

First, good records are now more important than ever. Real time data allows immediate feedback to address changes in consumer demand, attitudes, and behavior. Past data and performance are important, but more important is to position yourself to change on the fly.

Second, the need to advertise should be evaluated. Often, the advertising budget is the first to be slashed, but customers that are being driven by economic change are more demanding, more careful and more aware. Those customers are the ones you should try to capture with more advertising. Of course, this basic principle applies: Entrepreneurs must have a sound marketing plan and monitor the effectiveness of each advertising campaign. Ultimately, invest your advertising budget wisely to get the best possible return on your marketing dollars.

The importance of defining and managing the margin should be brought more in focus. If wholesale prices rise, retail should follow close behind, unless you use that good or service as a price leader to bring customers into your door. When fighting for scarce sales, most businesses cannot afford to absorb wholesale price increases. Small businesses must constantly review their gross profit margins to make sure that products are priced to protect income and ultimately cover operating expenses.

Relationships are possibly the most important element of a firm foundation. The relationship with your customers and your suppliers are the two most likely to allow you to make adjustments that keep your cash flow coming in the door. If your vendors understand your cash flow issues, they might be willing to make some adjustments or help offer incentives that drive the customer to your store front. Also, your banker should be treated like a supplier. They often supply you with the means to take aggressive steps or follow a new or redefined business plan.

Now on to some online resources: Liaise, Anaplan and LeapFILE are three fresh idea websites that might assist you if you are a business where you need to reduce your time spent on emails, improve planning and forecasting, assist in reporting or need assistance

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A Real Character

As a young boy my grandfather would use some words that were spoken by people in England during Chaucer's time. The Appalachian Mountains were isolated from the rest of the world during my grandfather's childhood. These mountains were not opened up to the rest of the world until my lifetime. Many of the words that were used

by early settlers to America were still in use until 1970's in rural Appalachia. These words included *holped*, directly and a phrase used by my grandfather was "a real character". Today's article will center on the previously mentioned phrase. This phrase meant that a person stood out because of their nature and character. Sometimes Papa would use the phrase to indicate a person was full of the devilment. But, most of the time my grandfather used the phrase to mean a person's intelligence and character should be emulated.

For example, Albert was a supervisor to my grandfather when Papa worked for Marshal Durbin Poultry. Papa respected Albert's education as well as his work ethic. Paw Henry was a kind old gentleman that attended Union Hill Methodist Church. Papa admired Paw Henry's dedication to his church and his kindness to the people around him. Both of these people earned my grandfather's respect and admiration. Therefore, he called them characters with the emphasis on "acter".

I have been dealing with some of the same type of people and would like to thank them for their help and support at the Green Bean Festival. The Farmers Market was asked to host the Green Bean Festival this past July. The following people comprised a committee that organized the event: Jo Anne Leone, Janet Hartman, Bev Paoletto, Janice Bolin, Shanna Beavers, Betty Moshier, Jo Anne Sales, Bud Akins, Kristy Penny, Sharon Penner, Teresa Moore, Susan Babcock, Brenda Lynn, Lynn Varian, Sue Boris, and Randy Dennison. These folks helped us plan and implement the festival this year. They are a dedicated, hardworking and sincere group of individuals. I want to

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Mom's Color Wheel

When I was six years old we moved from an old home my Dad had restored that was located in town, to a house my folks had built on the outskirts of town. This roomy split level, the most popular architectural design of the sixties, was majestically placed on a lovely, large wooded lot. Well, it was a wooded lot until the bulldozers came in to clear the land to build the house. They annihilated every timber.

When the first spring rolled around and it was time to plant grass on this barren soil, I can remember my Dad going to the Salvation Army where he bought an old bed box spring. After he removed all the fabric from the metal spring, he threw a large rope around one end of it – tied it to his waist and walked all over the property, dragging this makeshift grater. Using this method he removed loads of rock and stone out of the dirt, preparing the earth for the grass seed. After the whole lot was seeded, we watered the earth. And we watered some more. And then some more.....

Eventually we had a gorgeous Kentucky Blue grass yard that was joyous to run barefoot and roll in, the earth below it having been so painstakingly grated, there wasn't a stone to stub a toe. Over the years, Dad kept up with the lawns, but the gardens were my Mom's domain.

Most youngsters hone their knowledge of colors sifting through a deluxe box of Crayolas. My sister and I developed our color wheel from Mom's magnificent cut flower garden. There were asters, bachelor buttons, calla lilies, daffodils, echinacea, foxglove, gladiolus, hyacinth, iris, larkspur, marigold, narcissis and peonies. That takes care of the first half of the alphabet.....

Then there were zinnia, violets, tulips, and my favorite, snap dragons. Mom had every color combination of snap dragon imaginable. As a child I loved to watch the enormous bumble bees gracefully maneuver in and out of each delicate blossomed bud, marveling how they didn't get stuck once they got up in that folded petal.

Our biggest thrill was when we got permission to go in the garden and harvest. We'd bring in huge bouquets to fill the flower vases. To this day, my favorite vase for summer flowers is a quart ball jar. And I'm still captivated by the colors, shape and grace of the snap dragon.

These memories flood me when I walk through the Annual Farmers Market Flower Show. The local Garden Club and the Towns and Union County Master Gardeners coordinate this wonderful show each year to show-

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Letters

To the Editor

Gary who?

Dear Editor,

Gary Johnson, two-term governor of New Mexico, who slashed spending and taxes and debt and regulations and vetoed 750 spending bills (more than all the other governors combined!), is the 2012 Libertarian candidate for President of the USA and will probably be the only "third party" candidate on the ballot in all 50 states, and the only one with the mathematical possibility of earning enough electoral college votes to put him in the White House.

Some Americans realize that both the Republicans and Democrats are responsible for today's problems – that despite their rhetorical differences, both are responsible for the uncontrolled federal spending and enormous

See Esposito, page 5A

Plan of doom

Dear Editor,

Glad someone else is concerned about Paul Ryan's Budget Bill in their letter to the editor last week. This plan which has passed twice in the House of Representatives with nearly 100 percent of Republicans voting for it and no Democrats is a prescription for decline and disaster. In order for the wealthiest to get their \$5 trillion tax cut in this bill, there would have to be 25 percent cuts in all discretionary spending. It would slash government spending

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Thank you

Dear North Georgia News,

Thank you for a great open house! Union County Fire Department Station 4 held its annual open house on June 23, 2012. The open house was a great success and we would like to thank the citizens of Station 4's area for attending and for supporting their firefighters. The members of Station 4 would also like to thank a few special people who made it all possible: Lisa and Travis Henry for their help with the fire safety education trailer; Georgia Forestry Commission for their participation; DMI Collision and Neal Wright for donating cars for the extrication demonstrations; Firefighters Dustin Lee and Ben Barnes for assisting with demonstrations; James Bridges for loaning us the train for the kids; and the continuing support of Fire Chief Charles Worden and Commissioner Lamar Paris.

On behalf of all the volunteer firefighters in Union County, we thank everyone who donated to their fire stations. Your generous donations and continued support are what enables us to serve our community. Thank you *North Georgia News* for getting the word out!

Unprosecuted Crimes

Dear Editor,

Carl Sagan once said - An organism at war within its self is doomed. Likewise, a country at war within its self is also doomed. Sadly, our country is at war within our own borders. It's two political parties fighting for power and not solving our most important problems because they can't agree on anything. They only quibble, pontificate, filibuster, argue and finally pass legislation that means little benefit to anyone except the lobbyist who wrote the law in the first place. It seems that special interests runs the country more than the general populace. As a voter, I'm disappointed and frustrated by the massive inaction and I really feel their non-progress borders on treason. If we were to prosecute, what would we call the crime? Criminal Lethargy? Unlawful Criminal Apathy? Disgraceful Indifference? Who knows? It probably will never happen. Too bad.

Charles Sowers

Free Speech

Dear Editor,

The President and CEO of Chick-Fil-A had the audacity recently to talk about his Bible based Christian beliefs that marriage is the union between a man and woman. The mayors of three of our largest cities (Boston, Chicago and San Francisco) were appalled at his remarks and made it clear his restaurants would not be welcome in their cities. In fact, the mayor of Chicago went so far as to say these remarks were extreme and did not reflect the values of Chicago.

What values do they have? Thank God I live in Blairsville where traditional American values are still the norm. I will cross these three cities off my list of places I want to visit again. I will continue to visit places that still cherish the freedom granted all Americans under our Constitution.

Peter W. White

TSPLOST Vote

Dear Editor,

I had condidered voting for the subject tax until I noticed that my vehicle AD VALOREM tax had increased by 11.72 percent over last year or from \$89.74 to \$100.26.

Television ads urging folks to vote for the T-SPLOST program are threatening us with increased gasoline taxes over which we have no control. Guess what? It seems we have little control over any tax as evidenced by the Union County increase in AD VALOREM tax. When is enough tax enough?

Craig Jackson

Safe and Sound

Dear Editor,

I wanted to share a "good news" community story. On 7/30/12 my dog Deuy got loose and we could not find him. We searched until 2:30 am and started back up at 5 am. We passed out flyers, notified Mountain Shelter, Castaway Critters and Paul at Animal Control. I started getting calls on the flyers that the caring citizens of this community were joining in the search for my beloved dog. We were offering a large reward for his safe return, \$1,000.

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