

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Letter from the Editor

There's no sugar-coating the internal report from independent EMC attorney Steven Minor.

There were violations of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC bylaws, policies and apparently, some laws were broken.

Why there is only an "assisted response" by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation is beyond me.

Only the governor, district attorney and sheriff of a county in question can call for a criminal investigation.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason cannot ask for a GBI criminal investigation in this matter. BRMEMC is in Towns County, out of his jurisdiction.

The action response by the GBI in the case of BRMEMC was called for by the Governor's Office.

According to Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley, he has asked the State Attorney General's Office for assistance in the case. He also says he awaits the internal investigative report.

Well, according to that report, General Manager Matthew Akins falsely reported no conflicts of interests on IRS Form 990 for three years running.

Former Board President Terry Taylor violated O.C.G.A. 46-3-303.1(a)(1)(A), something akin to oath of office as a director of BRMEMC. That oath, called *duty of loyalty*, obligates officers and directors to avoid fraud, bad faith, usurpation of corporate opportunities and self-dealing.

Taylor also should have been removed as a BRMEMC director for his unpaid residential account which reached \$4,267.18 before being paid off.

Also, BRMEMC should be investigated for the way it handled a whistleblower incident. The incident, Taylor's unpaid commercial account. What was the whistleblower's reward for bringing this incident to light? He was demoted, and his pay was significantly reduced. He was cited with insubordination among other personnel reprimands he received.

All I can say is, thank you Chris Kelley for doing your duty. On a sad note, Chris Kelley resigned from Blue Ridge Mountain

See *Duncan, page 6A*

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Creative Hiding

There are some interesting stories of how people attempt to cover up their sins, crimes or bad habits. In one city where we lived, the bank near our church was robbed by two males. Our church was in Vacation Bible School so the authorities alerted us to secure the children inside the building. As it turned out, the robbers split up and one of them went to a residence nearby and forced his way in at gun point. He ordered the lady in the house to get him a pair of high heels, a dress and panty hose. He dressed up in the lady's clothes, instructed her to paint his face with make-up and lipstick. He placed a wig on his head, got in the trunk of her car and told her to drive him to a certain location where he had a get-away-car parked. Of course, she drove away with the robber in her trunk to a police barricade, stopped her car, got out and pointed to her trunk. Policemen opened the trunk and the silly looking male-female was staring up at about a half dozen gun barrels. I always thought that was the dumbest thing I had ever heard. However, I read a devotion by Michael Guido that was down right hilarious. He said that several years ago on the night before the Michigan and Ohio State football game, the Michigan coach ordered his team to "get a good night's rest." A lineman on the team decided he had rather engage in some riotous night life rather than rest. He came up with the ingenious idea to place a floor lamp under the covers of his bed so there would be the appearance of his body in bed. When the coach did his usual bed check at 11:00 o'clock, he switched on the light and the lineman's bed lit up. Be sure your sins will find you out!

One day all sin is going to light up. There is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed. Adam and Eve found out that fig leaves can't camouflage sin. Cain learned that his sin could not be buried beneath the earth's surface. Achan was tragically taught that sin cannot be hidden by bringing it home. David labored long and hard adding sin to sin attempting to hide one sin. He learned that the sin of murder would not hide the sin of adultery. He learned the valuable lesson that we all need to learn, that when we add sin to sin, sin begins subtracting all the good things from us. Sin takes peace

See *Parris, page 5A*

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

I held two public hearings on the property tax increase last week on Thursday, August 21, one at 11 a.m. and one at 5 p.m. The third hearing will be this Thursday, August 28 at 6 p.m. The following are some of the questions asked at the hearings and some comments that were made. I would like to thank everyone that came out to participate as they were all very civil and respectful of others.

Q. You mentioned at the public hearing on the tax increase that the added security at the courthouse was one of the main reasons for the property tax increase. My question is why was it necessary to have a security station at two entrances of the courthouse instead of just one, therefore saving some money?

A. That is exactly why I have avoided placing security at the courthouse for all these years - because I knew we would have to pay to handle both entrances and I did not think our county was ready or that the security screening was needed. When our courthouse was designed, the Brian Nichols courthouse shooting in Atlanta had not happened. Hardly any courthouse in Georgia had screening for firearms and other weapons. In fact, with this shooting where 4 people were killed, no one brought a gun into the courthouse, but one was taken from a deputy by a prisoner. However, following this event in 2005, every courthouse in Georgia had to have a security plan in place which involved the commissioners, sheriffs and judges and most of them installed security screening several years ago.

Since our courthouse was designed for the convenience of the public and not for security and since phase one was built in 1972 and phase 2 in 1977, the renovation and addition had to utilize the lay of the land and the building design already in use. Additional security was not contemplated. During court, the majority of citizens park in the lower parking lot and all the people utilizing the Clerk of Courts office park in the side or lower lot. If this entrance were to be blocked off, everyone would have to walk up hill a few hundred feet and walk through a parking lot, which would not be safe. So the decision had to be made to make the courthouse as convenient as possible for easy access for the more mature citizens of the county. The Sheriff's office is in charge of the security operation at the courthouse and they will be looking

See *Paris, page 5A*

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor ...

Clarification

Dear Editor,
As the Enotah Circuit District Attorney, I wanted to clarify the references made in a news article in your paper on August 13, 2014 in connection with the controversy surrounding Terry Taylor and an unpaid EMC electric bill, during his tenure with the EMC Board of Directors. The newspaper contacted me and asked if it was true that the GBI and the Attorney General's Office were involved, because the paper had received information that they had become involved.

I confirmed that the GBI had been contacted and that I had called the Attorney Gen-

See *Langley, page 5A*

Tasers a wise choice

Dear Editor,
I wanted to make a few corrections to your story about the local PD buying TASER ECWs. First off, I believe it is "KARBON ARMS" who makes the KARBON MPID (multi-purpose immobilization device). TASER is an acronym for Thomas A Swifts Electric Rifle and is a company trademark. This is why TASER has been able to get the injunction, because people are referring to the KARBON device as a Taser. These are better referred to as ECWs or Electronic Control Weapons.

The officer in your story requested that because of the injunction, that they purchase the TASER ECW and that TASERS are in between OC or pepper spray and deadly force. What is important is that ECWs give the officer more distance between themselves and the suspect, and have a better stopping ability than OC spray. Subjects usually receive less injuries (as do the officers) than using the baton or other tool. In addition, in an arrest, the officer always has to go "hands on". Once a subject is sprayed with OC, if they struggle at all, the officer ends up also getting OC (oleoresin Capsicum) on him, on his clothing, and on his equipment, affecting his vision and breathing.

See *Lanier, page 5A*

Bill highlighted security

Dear Editor,
My name is Jeff Anderson and I'm a member of gun rights group GeorgiaCarry.Org. We were able to support and get passed a new gun bill.

I am aware that the Union County Courthouse has put in a metal detector and claimed HB60 forced them to act. Nothing in the new bill required them to do so. A "courthouse" (as defined under GA code) is still off-limits for carry even under the new law. What the new bill did do is highlight the security flaw at courthouses that don't screen, that flaw is nothing was stopping anyone from carrying a firearm in the building except words on paper.

Government buildings other than "courthouses" were addressed by the new law and would allow carry in them by license holders, if that building doesn't screen in accordance to the new law. (This addresses the security flaw I spoke about above that criminals were already carrying in these buildings, but law-abiders were not).

See *Anderson, page 5A*

Thank you Olivia

Dear Editor,
It is always a bittersweet moment when someone who has done their job well and so admirably over the years decides to retire. I just came from the Retirement Party for Olivia Bragg, the Activities Director for the Union County Nursing Home, which was jam-packed with folks lined up to hug her and tell her how much they love her.

Olivia made an indelible mark on the residents, members of their families, and staff, as well as just plain folks like me, a member of Mountain Liners, who were called a few times each year to bring some zany entertainment to cheer the residents, along with those calls for

See *Gray, page 5A*



"I don't always enjoy having to work, but I am always glad to have a job."

Kudos for Quashing the Vermin

Dear Editor,
It's a bitter pill that acreage has to be squandered on the front page of the North Georgia News to recite the arrests and indictments of pushers, perverts and other vermin of our mountainous realm.

Thank you Sheriff Mason and the Union County Grand Jury for wasting that space. It shows you are doing your job and making the public aware of the criminal content of our county.

Between the news articles, notices and city and county reports of the sheriff and police departments it seems that crimes in our mountain hamlet are of greater proportion to our population than that of the ratio of the criminal collection to the people of Atlanta.

And the methamphetamine movers and shakers, addicts, child sex offenders and other rucks in our community that appear in the press are merely the ones that had the grounds to get caught. More are out there victorious and free to roam until they are plucked from our province.

It's sad that our rural domain, which is a haven to good people, farmers, families and

See *Moore, page 5A*

Management of BRMEMC

Dear Editor,
In theory, we 43,000 or so members own the BRMEMC. However, in practice our ownership is largely limited to paying debts incurred by the manager and a 9-member board of directors. The board hires the manager and members theoretically elect the board. Unfortunately, the system for selecting directors is so flawed they are in fact hand picked by management and we, the owners, have little choice in the matter.

Here's how the system works. BRMEMC picks a committee that decides who will be nominated. The committee nominates only one person for each position and that is almost always the incumbent. So we members can only vote for whomever the committee selects meaning

See *Gibson, page 5A*

Great employees at VA Clinic

Dear Editor,
Seems in these times there is a lot of grumbling and complaining of many things. I am glad to say in regards to the VA outpatient clinic here in Blairsville, what a great gathering of VA employees. All are caring, kind, considerate, very helpful, professional and with all this a great attitude and still take time to put a smile on my face. I tip my hat to Dr. Sarrell, nurses Margit and Linds, in administration JoAnn, LouAnn, Chantell and Yvonne. In the lab, Rebecca and recently promoted Neil. If I forgot anyone I apologize. I know there are many others, but I just have not met them as yet. Ya'll make your clinic shine and I thank you so very much.

Gary Lee

Boogers in the Night

Growing up in the country kids like me learned all types of things about scary boogers or events that happened to other people. I have heard old folks talk about fluorescent green, glowing lights that followed people as they walked down lonely stretches of roads in dark woods during the night. Granny use to tell me about panthers that would try to sneak up on people to stalk and catch them unawares.

I have even heard that my great-great grandmother Baker haints a hill close to her home place in North-western Alabama. I guess it is a thousand wonders I didn't have nightmares every night when I was growing up.

Many of these stories were told to me before the TV became the far reaching influence it is today. Back in those days children and adults used their imagination more than we use our imaginations today. Back in the early 1940s Papa bought his first piece of property (80 acres) for \$100/acre. Papa and Granny cleared, farmed and live on that original 80 acres to this day. They built a small, framed house and carried water from a quarter of a mile away. A few years after the house was built Papa dug a well right next to the house. The well was brand new and didn't even have a well house over it yet when a mishap happened. The only covering over the well was an old 2x12 with a tarp over it. Late one night the family milk cow fell astraddle of that 2x12.

The cow's full weight was resting on the board and she was having trouble getting free of the well and board. She would bellow a deep, mournful, guttural sound resembling a growl from a large animal. The cow could not take in enough air to moo like a regular sounding cow which resulted in a growling sound. Also, the well was located right next to the house and each time the cow would swing her head her horns would rake across the siding of the house. So, my grandparents thought something was growling and clawing the side of the house. Papa got up to go check on this awful sound and each time he would reach the door the cow would bellow out this sound and rake her horns on the house. Papa would let out a scream of terror and Papa would run back to check on her and his sons. Eventually, Papa gathered enough nerve to go outside and confront the demon. He laughs about it today. But, back in those days he was plenty scared of that awful sound.

A month or so later a mad dog came to Papa's house. Granny said their house was not even finished yet. It was still summer. The walls of the house weren't finished. Papa said, "We didn't even have some of the outside doors up yet". For those of you that don't know today we would say a mad dog was rabid. Granny described the dog as slobbering at the mouth and it attacked their dog. Next the dog came for the family. Granny and her boys got up into the loft while Papa fetched the gun. She said, "Papa would run from one side of the house to the other searching for the dog". Papa was running around while Granny directed him to a spot where

See *Cummings, page 5A*

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Youth Leadership Union

The kick off of our 2014 Youth Leadership Union program is just around the corner. The Blairsville-Union County Chamber is proud to present this incredible series in partnership with our sponsor, Community & Southern Bank.

Youth Leadership Union was established to develop the knowledge and skills of the participants to become our leaders of tomorrow. During the 9-week program, participants will better understand the foundations of leadership, develop a sense of community by touring many local government offices and business operations, and gain valuable lifelong skills such as interviewing and wardrobe, personality styles, basics of entrepreneurship, and public speaking. Most sessions will take place on Tuesday evenings at the Union County Community Center beginning September 23, and a meal will be provided.

Selection into the program will be based on a written application and interview process and will be limited to 20 students. Applicants must be in the 10th or 11th grade and attend school in Union County or live in Union County. They must demonstrate outstanding character and desire to make an impact in their community through involvement in business organizations, civic club, churches, and/or other extra-curricular activities. We seek participants who are honest, have integrity, dependability and a

See *Williams, page 5A*

Before the Full Moon

I was trailing behind my Daideo, nearly running to keep his pace. It was a tempo too slow for my grandfather, but he had no choice but to follow the restrained lick of his old mule, Chaz.

My eyes were set on Daideo's ragged leather boots, with their thread bare laces, as they moved steadily in front of me. I marveled at how his ankles seemed to rotate without being connected to any other part of his legs.

They moved up and then sunk deep into the soft, dark earth that mounded up under the blades of the plow we followed. Then they swiveled as his feet hit the rocks that had been driven from the depths of the land in these mountain fields that my family farmed. I stumbled as I would hit the heavy clods of dirt with my tiny feet, landing on my knees, or sometimes, if my momentum was high, I'd land in the faded, patched buttocks of my grandfather's old overalls.

Earlier this morning Daideo had lost patience with me. The fog was thick, and I pleaded that we wait sometime before we went out to the fields. He insisted we head out early, for this field, the plot where this year's corn would rise, had to be turned over before the end of the day.

I should have been grateful for the cool dampness of the early morning dew, clouds hanging low, disguising the mountains behind the cotton clusters. The sun broke through too soon; the only shade came from along the fence rows.

All morning long, we moved forward, grandfather encouraging the mule to push faster, muttering his impatience under his breath in between loud bursts of gee and haw. Often I'd mimic Daideo, pulling out my handkerchief, wiping my freckled brow. Maimeo had tucked the blue cotton cloth into my dungaree pocket on the way out the fence gate, along with a biscuit laced with dried currents. She rustled my hair, and then wet her finger with her spit, lovingly spreading it onto the hair cowl on my Irish amber crown. It was if she was readying me for church instead of the fields.

That morning Chaz must have sensed my near exhaustion, for when I didn't think my legs would carry me one more step, the mule stopped. Daideo's face was scowled, and he yelled at the old moke to press on, but after following him for over two decades, my grandfather knew that it was a hopeless effort. He dropped the worn leather straps, removed the sweat soaked old felt hat from

See *Leone, page 5A*

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