

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The \$62,354 Glitch

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Director Jerry Nichols needs to get more in tune with the Cooperative's customer base.

Speaking before the Mountain Movers and Shakers in Young Harris recently, he told the group that the EMC didn't have "any accounts, anywhere on Blue Ridge Mountain EMC that uses \$60,000 worth of power a month."

Well, we had to do a little digging, but, we found a couple of users that do use \$60,000 a month or more, and they are BRMEMC customers.

Following our recent records request by the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald*, the newspapers learned that Union General Hospital pays more than \$100,000 a month, depending on the weather, for electricity.

Also, the Union County School System averages \$50,000 to \$80,000 a month based on how Mother Nature is cooperating.

We're certain that both the hospital and the school system would be happy for the EMC to declare their monthly bills as meter glitches, much like the \$62,354 correction (glitch) that was made to Taylor and Taylor Construction's bill in July.

The only problem that Mr. Nichols seems to have is that someone made sure we had a copy of Taylor and Taylor Construction's June 10 bill which showed a balance of \$107,998.43.

If we were in Mr. Nichols' shoes, we would be more concerned with the fact that the former president of BRMEMC's board of directors had indeed received a perk of not being on a cutoff list with his commercial operation's ability to continue to use electricity not threatened.

And, as we have learned from the \$30,000 opinion put out by EMC Attorney Steven Minor, Mr. Taylor also was \$4,200 or so in arrears on his residential power bill.

Those are things the EMC Board of Directors need to be concerned with, not whether someone finally spilled the beans.

There will be a final tally of votes for the three seats currently up for grabs on the EMC Board of Directors. The only question we have is who will be counting the votes. And we're also concerned that EMC employees are being directed to vote for the incumbents on the board. We've seen documentation that this has happened.

Until Saturday, all we can do is cross our fingers and hope for a legitimate election. The membership demands it.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



No laughing matter

It is sad but it is also a fact that there are some miserable people in this world. They get up every morning with that pharisaical face, a pallbearer pale. They have that look of a 40-day fast.

For these folks nothing is a laughing matter. They are waiting for something to turn up so that's the reason they are always looking at their toes.

Most of these individuals are on a mission to straighten out the world, but the only people I know who are able to straighten out anyone are undertakers. They do a pretty good job but they are not faced with any resistance so to speak.

One thing about some people is that they will never die laughing. They may die complaining, grumbling, criticizing, gossiping, eating or sleeping but they will never be caught dead laughing.

People who do not laugh feel bad when they feel good because they are afraid that they are going to feel worse when they feel better. In fact, no matter how much money they have, they are not going to laugh all the way to the bank. Well, all of us need to lighten up and laugh more.

When we lighten up we are more able to see the light. Our adversary, the devil is never more pleased with us than when we face the world looking like we had briars for breakfast. The world needs the friendly, loving, uplifting smile from our faces.

Not only does the world need it but as *Reader's Digest* says "Laughter is the Best Medicine." Laughter is contagious and has physiological and psychological benefits. It increases our respiration, helps us to think better. Laughter helps the blood flow to the brain helping us to think better.

Laughter helps to alleviate stress, boosts the immune system and creates a calmness and peace that makes life a satisfying journey. Do you know there are laughter clubs springing up all over the country?

Also, there are laughter seminars that you can attend. There are revivals that are labeled "laughing revivals" (I am not

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

These questions are prepared for your information. It is that time of year when we will soon be in fall with all the leaves on the ground and people doing a lot of outdoor burning. It will typically also turn to a much dryer time of year, making wildfires and forest fires a real possibility unless we use common sense and caution.

Q. I heard on the news a few weeks ago about a burn ban in effect from May 1 through Sept. 30 this year. Is that for Union County?

A. The May 1st through Sept. 30th burn ban DOES NOT include Union County. There are 54 counties that are under the burn ban but they are larger population counties including the metro Atlanta counties.

Q. What are the rules for burning in Georgia?

A. If you do not live in one of these counties under the burn ban, certain types of open burning are legal. Georgia's open burning rule specifies what you can burn. Remember that any type of open burning, also known as outdoor burning, including leaves, in the state of Georgia requires a burn permit, with the exception of certain acceptable agricultural burning.

Q. How do I obtain a burn permit?

A. To obtain a permit, simply call 1-877-OK2BURN (1-877-652-2876) or obtain one online at: <http://gatrees.org/OnlinePermits>. The online burn permit website is provided by the Georgia Forestry Commission, which provides the permits, and will also alert you of any additional local burn restrictions.

Remember that burn permits are good only for the day they are issued. If you obtain your permit after dark, the permit is good for the following day.

Q. What are some types of open burning that are legal in the state of Georgia?

A. Please note that the burning of garbage or lumber, even in a burn barrel, is illegal. Some of the legal types of burning are:

Reduction of leaves on premises of origin, agricultural procedures for production of harvesting of crops, prescribed burning, recreational purposes and cooking, fire-fighting training, acquired structure burns, vegetative debris from storms, weed abatement, disease and pest prevention, open-flame devices, land clearing,

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

Is Collins your man?

Dear Editor,

Recently Representative Doug Collins sent a letter to his constituents in which he promised to "always stand up to President Obama's reckless policies."

I spoke to his staff man in Gainesville about this letter.

See Cheves, page 5A

How things have changed

Dear Editor,

I have never written a letter to the editor before but this is my BRMEMC story.

My family moved to Blairsville in February, 1970. We had spent the previous year living in Central America, mostly Honduras where my father had been working with a missionary friend. When we returned to the States, Dad didn't want to live in Atlanta anymore and wanted to raise his family in a better environment. By sheer happenstance he ended up in Blairsville. Dad had no family or friends here. He had a camper, a wife, and four kids.

Within a few months he found and bought an old home place that was owned by a family that had moved on. The place was neglected, overgrown and in need of lots of repair.

When Dad called the EMC to get service installed, a life-long friendship was begun. On the day service was installed three men: Bud Kelley, Newt Dyer and Clarence Adams came out to the house. They were all wearing EMC jackets.

No doubt they saw my Dad's plight. Bud Kelley saw several deficiencies in the electrical work in the house. Clarence and Newt saw the overgrown field and garden areas and the general disrepair of everything.

The following Saturday morning, I can still see it, I can still hear it, the sound of tractors and men laughing. They were still wearing their EMC jackets. Newt was bush-hogging everything. Bud moved and rewired a hot water heater. Clarence was moving brush. Bud also brought a tractor. After Newt bush hogged everything, they plowed, they harrowed and they laid out a garden. It was springtime and they knew my dad needed a garden for his four kids. It was an amazing day for a 10-year-old to witness. People working everywhere.

They had other friends to stop by and help for a while but I don't remember all of

See Smith, page 5A

Unfair

Dear Editor

Each week we learn more about the Terry Taylor financial mess, or should I say that we are told more stories by various EMC employees.

At this point it is difficult to know what to believe! But one thing is clear - Mr. Taylor received special treatment for his overdue electric bill, consideration that is not given to regular people who may be having a little trouble.

Ten days ago I was out on my porch when I heard the weak voice of my 74-year-old neighbor calling me from the path in our woods.

This woman who had a stroke about a year ago had made her way 1,000 feet through the woods with her cane to get some help because her power had been shut off hours before and she had no phone!

Thinking at first that it was due to our morning storm, we quickly found out that her bill was overdue.

We called EMC and got the \$236 paid over the phone, and were then told that a \$50 re-connect fee would be added to the next bill!

I wonder if Mr. Taylor's power went off for even 2 minutes and what the re-connect fee on a \$45,000 overdue bill would be! It is outrageous that our sweet neighbor who lives on Social Security is treated like this while others

See Lowery, page 5A



"How disturbing! ...I think I need some comfort food."

Make your vote count

Dear Editor,

I appreciate your bringing the issues regarding BRMEMC to light and continuing to follow the story.

I have always been puzzled by the "customer charge", as if we had a choice to be a customer or not.

I too pay two customer charges on one account, as the meters are "too far apart." By putting conservation techniques in place, one of our bills has gone to \$11 a month with a "customer charge" of \$19.73!

Last year the explanation given was that less building, less meter hook ups, less electricity used meant they had to find a way to recoup expenses. I have always been under the impression the EMC wants us to conserve energy and use less. The reward will be you will pay more it seems.

The explanation given this week is that it is the "cost of doing business." This is true.

See Quigley, page 5A

We must vote them out

Dear Editor

Surely the BRMEMC management and Board of Directors are aware that we the members—who pay the bills—are more than a little angry about the new headquarters that is an extravagant monument to someone's ego.

It is a disgrace - the debt members now owe, the fact that the board president was allowed to rack up a \$49,000 bill while enjoying full benefits, and the half truths and stonewalling that have been going on since these matters came to light.

If board members had integrity or concern for their reputations, any regard for concerns of the membership, they would voluntarily resign. But they apparently don't.

Every last one hopes to retain his position, and continue collecting payment for attending meetings where they see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil, just like the three monkeys who represent turning a blind eye.

Since not one of them will do the right thing, we members who own the co-op have to unseat them.

We have just one opportunity to get rid of one third of the board this year.

We MUST VOTE them out.

If you cannot attend the annual meeting on September 13, you can vote online by Wednesday, September 10, no later than 4 pm.

It is urgent that everyone who wants an open and honest board of directors vote.

Use the voter ID and verification code on your August power bill and vote. Reach out to family members, friends or neighbors who do not have a computer and help them vote.

If we don't vote out the incumbents, we have only ourselves to blame. Take back the BRMEMC for its members (and billpayers). Vote out all incumbents!

Carol Gibson

How Did You Get Here?

During the year of 1839 two young people were married. Ausborn Rogers Mabry married Elizabeth Fatima York. Ausborn and Elizabeth spent the next 40 years raising their family in the Dahlonega and Dawsonville area.

One of their daughters happened to marry a fellow by the name of Daniel T. Hyde. Daniel fought with some Georgia volunteers in defense of his state against the Union Army during the Great War. For some unexplained reason Ausborn and Fatima left their home in Lumpkin County and moved to Oklahoma during the 1880s. They never met their grandson, Clifford Hyde, who would later become my great grandfather.

Clifford told my dad that his ancestors were Cherokee. But, no one has ever been able to prove it. Clifford was raised up around the Dawsonville area and later he migrated to North Alabama. My grandmother told me a story about his search for Cherokee Gold.

Sometime during the 1920s an old Cherokee man showed up at the Hyde House in Phil Campbell. It was late in the evening just before dark. It was beginning to thunder and darkness was coming on the land. The family was just sitting down to a meal of corn bread and fresh vegetables. The family could not afford meat. The children were all bare footed. Clifford dreamt of the day he could afford to buy shoes and new clothes for his kids. Suddenly, there was a knock at the front door. This took everyone by surprise, because they rarely had visitors.

Clifford opened the door and there stood an ancient Cherokee Indian. He asked the family for some food and a place to spend the night. As the old man sat down to eat he began to tell the family his story. He figured his age to be 98 and he had walked all the way from Oklahoma. He came back the same way he had traveled as a young boy, on the Trail of Tears. He told Clifford that he wanted to see his home land in North Alabama one more time before he died. Somehow, he also knew that Clifford was Cherokee.

The next morning the family and the old man had a breakfast of eggs, biscuits and fresh blackberry jam. The old man told Clifford he was just a few miles short of his destination and he wanted to get started as quick as possible. But, he wanted to give Clifford something for his hospitality. He stated that 75 years earlier his people knew the soldiers were coming to force their departure to Oklahoma. They also knew they would not be allowed to take much with them. He said they had about 100 pounds of gold that had been hidden a few days before the soldiers arrived.

The old man related the gold had been hidden in a rock face above the Turkey's foot.

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



If you have ever wondered what a Chamber of Commerce is really all about, you are not alone. In fact, most people who work for a Chamber of Commerce (myself included) at one time had to ask that same question. The good news is, we have answers. Those who are interested in learning more about the business services provided to our members are invited to join us for our upcoming Chamber Orientation.

The Orientation will be held on Tuesday, September 23 from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. at the Union County Community Center located at 129 Union County Recreation Road. GnG Bakery and Café is generously sponsoring the event and providing a complimentary, light breakfast to all attendees. This session is intended not only for existing members, but also for interested business owners and organization leaders who would like to better understand the business services provided by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. Those who attend can look forward to learning about the structure and leadership of our local Chamber, benefits that members enjoy by being part of our organization, cost saving opportunities, events and programs offered through the Chamber, and instructions on how to use your unique login to

See Williams, page 5A

Doing something with good ideas

Good ideas are a dime a dozen. Great ideas aren't quite as prolific. And some ideas, mediocre and great, are just too forward for their time.

After World War II, Harry Taylor would tell his brothers and his children about an idea he had. People would have credit everywhere they shopped. They'd have an ID card and when they showed it, they would be able to purchase the item without paying for it. At the end of the month, the purchaser would get an invoice from a company that managed the credit, and he would pay for all his purchases from all over town, the state or the world with that one invoice. He might just have to pay part of it, with the credit being extended and interest would be charged. His family thought Harry had big ideas that weren't practical.

A decade later, a gentleman by the name of Joseph P. Williams was the leader of the think tank for Bank of America. In 1958, Williams convinced the Board of Directors to mail out 60,000 unsolicited cards extending credit for purchases at all participating points of sale, specifically in Fresno, CA, population 250,000. Williams and his "think tank" believed that if 20% of the population was extended credit, the card would be successful. That was the launch of VISA.

Joseph P. Williams became a multi-millionaire. Poor Harry Taylor, whose same idea never got further than the Sunday dinner table or the 19th hole, was left crying in his beer.

The Union County Farmers Market was Mickey Cummings' idea. For years, Mickey had been working with the Farmers of Union County and saw the hardship that they had, delivering their crops to Gainesville and Atlanta to be sold at Market. He thought that if they had a place to sell their crops locally, they would be able to have more profit and reinvest in the future of their farms.

It took many years to get that idea off the ground. Lamar Paris agreed whole heartedly with Mickey's proposed plan. When the Market first opened in the parking lot of the "new" court-

See Leone, page 5A

Farmers Market Moment

JorAnne Leone



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