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ries I write about are true. Anytime I get together with my family I will ask questions about the old days and sooner or later I will get a story I can use in this column.

These two stories came directly from my Aunt Carolyn while we visited during the week between Christmas

2012 and New Year's Day 2013.

Beginning in 2013, I will begin organizing these stories from the earliest stories to the latest stories.

Hopefully, you will be able to gain some sort of historic perspective from these events. Happy New Year to each of you!

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lac. Growing up I was very physically active. Many of my friends were sloths compared to me. Yet they could ingest the same French fries soaked in beef gravy (it's a western NY delicacy) and still find it necessary to have their size 2 prom dress taken in. I was lucky to find a prom dress that zipped, that wasn't designed by Omar the Tent Maker.

I'm truly the last person that should be doling out weight loss advice, but I'm asked all the time how I've done it the past three years. It's different for everyone, so I will not espouse a particular plan. I will share with you what has worked for me and more important, how I came to decide that this was a food plan I could live with the rest of my life. I'm a second generation Sicilian. One of our favorite foodie treats is a good antipasti. Salami, prosciutto, a variety of olives and cheeses, roasted red peppers, sun dried tomatoes, all drizzled with olive oil and chased with a loaf of warm Italian bread.

When I considered my choices for losing weight, I knew I had to give up either fat or carbs. If I gave up fat, I essentially said arrivederci to everything on that antipasti dish except the roasted peppers and the bread (no butter). If I gave up the simple or "bad" carbs, I only had to give up the bread. No brainer

for me. If I gave up the potato, I could still eat a big steak and blue cheese dressing on my salad. If I gave up pizza crust I could still have the pepperoni, the sauce, the gooey melted cheese and any other sinful topping I wanted. That was so much more appealing than a carrot laced crusted pizza I once indulged in while dieting 40 years ago. These were my choices.

My advice to those serious about losing weight is to sit down with a blank piece of paper and ask yourself how you really want to eat the rest of your life. It's much like determining your budget. You can't imagine living without your premium movie channel subscription but you'd rather keep the heat on one degree warmer. You decide heat to be of more comfort to you than watching first runs of Dexter. You'd rather get up and go wherever you like, without considering the cost of gasoline, so you opt to keep the old car on the road instead of being saddled with a car loan. The bacon and eggs meant more to me than the toast or waffle.

Life should be about choices, and so should your food plan. Decide what matters most and then choose it. And resolve to keep that choice, always, one bite at a time. Happy New Year.

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cancer causing activities to go on unrestricted), prohibit texting while driving (while allowing newspaper reading, makeup application, eating and various other distracting activities).

Someday, future anthropologists will study our generations and be left with the question, "What the hell were these people thinking?"

And so that brings us to the issue of the moment – gun control.

And I say moment because our society will be on to the next issue in a relative short period of time because we all suffer from ADD to a greater or lesser degree. It is the reason that history repeats itself. We are incapable of staying focused long enough to develop permanent solutions so we patch it up for the moment and move on.

The horror of the Newtown, CT shootings is almost too much for most of us to comprehend and the utter devastation of those parents is fathomable only to other bereaved parents who have experienced the death of a child.

As we search for solutions our discussion should be framed less around the white-hot emotion of the moment and more about the facts of this situation and pragmatic answers that will prevent similar situations.

The salient facts as reported and confirmed by various media sources are: The guns involved were legally obtained and owned by a law-abiding citizen.

That citizen was the mother of a mentally challenged son whose behavior had deteriorated to the point that she was beginning to pursue conservatorship in order to have her son committed.

The guns were not sufficiently secured from a known mentally challenged and unstable individual.

The consequences of No. 3 are horrific.

So perhaps instead of a national conversation on violence, gun control and mental health, society would be better served with a national conversation on personal responsibility.

Patrick Malone

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And that little old man was just sitting outside of Walmart, enjoying the sun's warmth, waiting for his wife.

Then, there was the morning at a Waffle House when I spoke with another white-haired gentlemen who was wearing a red, USMC hat with its yellow lettering.

I wished him a Merry Christmas and we spoke for a few minutes. He allowed that he was "a survivor."

"A survivor?"

There were tears in his eyes when he said, "I was in the first wave to hit the beach at Iwo Jima."

Just like that, a statement of simple fact.

Those World War II veterans are leaving us at the rate of 1,500 each day. When one of them passes, a library closes, never to reopen.

George Mitchell

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of Union County. Because we believe that our future lies in the success of our youth, we also annually coordinate a Youth Leadership program. Additionally, the Chamber serves as the local sponsor of the STAR program, recognizing academic excellence.

Finally, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is proud to give back to the local community that so graciously supports us. We do so by organizing and sponsoring several events and programs that directly contribute to the exceptional quality of life enjoyed by Union County citizens.

For instance, the Chamber proudly sponsors the Fourth of July Fireworks, Christmas Tour of Trees, and

Buy Local Shopping Week-ends.

It is easy to see that the Chamber of Commerce is involved and dedicated to the long term prosperity of Union County. The Board of Directors and staff believe that it is a privilege to work for the betterment of our community. There is no doubt, over the last six years; I have gained a new respect for the role the Chamber plays. I believe in the value of the Chamber. It is my hope that you too will believe.

If you are interested in learning more about the Chamber or would like to join as a member, please contact our office at (706) 745-5789 or me directly at president@blairsvillichamber.com.

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**Q.** While I do not agree with all your decisions, I certainly am thankful that we have a sole commissioner form of government. I have never been in a town or city, and I have been in many over the past 30 years, that can get so much done with such a reasonable amount of taxes. How does this happen?

**A.** It is always nice to hear these comments and it is very true. I do not think there is a better form of county government. Some people think one commissioner has too much power, but it is simply not the case. All you have to do is compare the sole commissioner counties with the commissioner boards, and for the most part, you will see disharmony, and constant conflict with many of the boards. The sole commissioner counties work efficiently and you can ask any senator or representative that has one in their district about the difference in working with the two different forms of government.

We often hear people who have moved here from other states talk about all the fighting and corruption that has gone on in their counties and what a pleasant change that is in Union County.

**Q.** Does a sole commissioner get as much feedback from the community as a commission board in making decisions?

**A.** The answer is "yes". I think we get more. Because we know that the results of our decisions can not be passed off on anyone else, we spend more time consulting with members of the public and experts so we can make the very best decision.

The dynamics of group decisions often involve either going along with the group or wanting to be opposite to the group, both of which can cause problems. Unfortunately, personalities also get involved and if you ever have one or more commission members get mad at others, then many decisions can and often do become contentious and members can lose sight of what is best for the entire county and not just their district. This can also cause a lot of money to be wasted.

**Q.** Is Congress (Washington, DC) in a similar situation now with not working together to make important decisions for our country?

**A.** By the time you read this, we will either have gone off the fiscal cliff or our Congress will have made a last minute decision to prevent our economy from going into another recession. Either way, in the end, I suspect they will continue to fight and call each other names.

However, Congress has proven in the past that when our backs are up against the wall, as was the case with 9/11, everyone pulled together in our country to do what was best for the country. Whether you were for or against war, Democrat or Republican, everyone wanted to go after those who caused so much harm to our country and we did it in unison. Where has that attitude gone?

**Q.** Can Congress still make good decisions?

**A.** In my opinion, one of the major problems with Congress right now is that many of them have lost sight of what is best for the entire country, but are only looking at what is best for their individual political careers or their local constituents. But there are times that decisions must be made that are best for the entire country and not just for the people who voted them in to office. This is one of those times. I hope we will be pleasantly surprised at the results. Lets hope some true statesmen evolve from this process.

Finally, I wish one and all a very Happy and prosperous New Year.

## UNION COUNTY COMMUNITY CALENDAR

|                        |                                                                 |              |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Garden Tours           | <b>Every Monday:</b><br>GMREC                                   | 9 am - 1 pm  |
| Boy Scouts #101        | United Methodist Ch                                             | 7 pm         |
| Children's Story Time  | Union County Library                                            | 11 am        |
| Kiwanis Club           | Steve's Steakhouse                                              | Noon         |
| Civil Air Patrol       | Blairsville Airport                                             | 6:30 pm      |
| Mtn. Woodcarvers       | <b>Every Tuesday:</b><br>Senior Center                          | 6 pm         |
| Sweet Adelines         | United Methodist Ch                                             | 6:30 pm      |
| Get Fit                | First UMC                                                       | 5:15 pm      |
| Masonic Luncheon       | <b>Every Thursday:</b><br>Cooks Restaurant                      | 11:30 am     |
| Butternut Ladies Golf  | Golf Course (Apr-Oct)                                           | 8:30 am      |
| Rotary Club            | Cadence Bank                                                    | Noon         |
| Get Fit                | First UMC                                                       | 5:15 pm      |
| Misty Mtn Quilt Guild  | <b>Second Monday of each month:</b><br>Hayesville               | 10 am-3 pm   |
| Historical Society Bd. | <b>Second Tuesday of each month:</b><br>Old Courthouse          | 9:30 am      |
| Band Boosters          | UC Middle School                                                | 7:30 pm      |
| Beta Sigma Phi         | (Aug through May, except Dec)                                   |              |
| Eastern Star #304      | Kappa Alpha Chapter                                             | 7 pm         |
| Mtn Laurel Arts/Crafts | Location not listed                                             | 7:30 pm      |
| Mtn. Reg. Arts/Crafts  | Union County Library                                            | 10 am        |
| NARFE                  | Library - Young Harris                                          | 7 pm         |
| FPL Retirees           | Grinds & Glazes                                                 | Noon         |
| Mtn. Sounds Dulcimer   | Hole in Wall Rest.                                              | 9 am         |
|                        | Sr. Citizens Center                                             | 1:30-3:30 pm |
| Parkinson's Sup. Grp   | <b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b><br>Cadence Bank          | 3 pm         |
| UC Interagency Grp.    | UC Civic Center                                                 | Noon         |
| GA Mtn Writers Club    | St. Francis of Assisi                                           | 10 am        |
| Sons Confederate Vet.  | <b>Second Thursday of each month:</b><br>UCB Community Rm       | 7 pm         |
| Appalachian Shriners   | Allegheny Lodge                                                 | 6:30 pm      |
| Knights of Columbus    | Marian Hall                                                     | 7:30 pm      |
| Lions Club             | Steve's Cookie Jar                                              | 6 pm         |
| Democratic Party       | UC Senior Center                                                | 6:30 pm      |
| Trout Unlimited        | Cadence Bank                                                    | 6:30 pm      |
| UC Tea Party Patriots  | UC Civic Center                                                 | 7 pm         |
| Eastern Star #471      | <b>Second Friday of each month:</b><br>Location not listed      | 7:30 pm      |
| His Victory Riders     | <b>Second Saturday of each month:</b><br>Blairsville Restaurant | 5 pm         |