

Opinions

Everybody has one...

It's Soptober

There, I've said it, and I've been thinking about it for two months, Soptober. That's my new catch phrase for the annual Sorghum Festival. It has everything to do with my favorite part of this annual rite of the fall season. I've always admired the Biscuit Eating Contest.

Yes, I spelled it correctly, although in some circles it's spelled differently. Sometimes, I just can't get past Spell Check.

Nevertheless, I do and always have enjoyed that contest. I guess it's because I always thought I could win it. I never took the chance when I was younger, and now Dr. James Varnell suggests it might not be the best thing for me to do.

All the other games, the rocking throwing, the pole climbing, the log sawing, well, they just never appealed to me. Could be they closely resemble things I'd done all my life and I didn't sense the excitement.

But, biscuit eating, and sopping sorghum syrup - and I've done quite a bit - well, that's more exciting to me. I've always wondered what those Festival biscuits taste like. Do they taste like the biscuits that I crave with hot, creamy mountain gravy?

Well, Dr. Varnell suggests that I'm better off if I never find out the answer to those questions.

I do admire the men, women and children who look like they surely are enjoying themselves when they sop those biscuits in that sweet mountain syrup.

They actually are having fun, that much I can tell. The best photographs that unfold each year at the Sorghum Festival come from the biscuit eating contest. We have photos of people trying to catch bits of biscuit as it breaks while they're trying to put it in their mouths. We have photos of folks with sorghum syrup all over their faces as they enjoy the contest to its fullest.

I always associated the biscuit eating contest with a healthy appetite, but, you know, it's not really about that. It's about some of the things that we do best. We have some of the best biscuit makers in the world right here in Blairsville, GA. And Lord knows there isn't another place on God's Green Earth that makes better sorghum syrup than the families that have made it here for generations.

People come here from all over just to get a few jars, or cases for that matter, of that most delicious syrup made right here in Blairsville, GA.

That's what made me think about the catch phrase Soptober. It's a perfect fit for our annual festival. It goes with everything that people admire about the Sorghum Festival. I've been a few places, and everywhere I've been, they ask me about the biscuit eating contest.

They tell me how much they'd like to enter that event up in those North Georgia Mountains.

All I can say is, do it before you meet Dr. James Varnell.

Happy Soptober!

Letters to the Editor ...

In A Nutshell

Dear Editor,

There are lots of complaints about the parks, etc. being closed because of the government shutdown. Can you image what would happen if they were open, but, without the Rangers or security to protect those places? If you were in the shoes of the Rangers or other employees, you would not want to work for nothing either, even if they had a choice.

Another thing, if you have public water service, feel lucky. Do you have any idea what it costs to have a well dug and maintained, if water can be found on your property? You can pay for city or county water for many years for the same cost. If the water is off occasionally because of repairs or updates or other maintenance, it is only a minor inconvenience, comparatively. If it is a well, repairs are very costly and you could have to wait for days for a repairman. If the well goes dry...

Diane Clark

Being taught a lesson

Dear Editor,

My letter (Aug. 28) complained of the frequent water shut-off (sometimes for hours) as our customers suffer at the hands of the Coosa Water Authority, with never an apology for the inconvenience caused.

A Sept. 11th letter from another Coosa customer complained about the "ultra hard water" and the ugly scale that is left on everything. Needless to say, no response from Coosa to this, either.

Sole Commissioner Paris, in his column (Sept. 18), on the subject of homeowners insurance rates, however, did make a sort-of reference to my call for a single county-wide supplier of water, just as we have a single supplier of electricity. Judging from the commissioner's words, though, pigs will fly before such an eventuality will ever occur. Thus doomed, Coosa Water Authority customers would be well-advised to get a rain barrel for flushing toilets and have on hand plenty of bottled water for drinking and cooking. We are under siege!

I was curious about Commissioner Paris's comment "... to receive a further reduced rate (on your homeowners policy), you must also be within 1,000 feet of an approved water source." I took this to mean a hydrant. However, what good is a hydrant when there is no water running to it, as is the all too frequent case with Coosa Water's shut-offs? How much would insurance rates be increased for residences served by Coosa Water if the insurance companies were made aware of this?

Ho-hum! Our water was off again the other day (for about three hours), curiously at the very time the righteous were at church; perhaps we non-believers and backsliders were being taught a lesson.

It was not that long ago when fears were raised about the possibility that "terrorists" - foreign or domestic - would try to poison public water supplies. Americans were warned to be on the alert for any suspicious activities

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What Book Do You Love?

It is tragic but a lot of people have never read nor studied God's book, The Holy Bible. I suppose it is even more tragic that a number of people read books about the Bible, attend seminars related to the Bible, they buy Bibles but neglect to read the Bible.

Some people's opinion of the Bible is that it is an outdated, obsolete book that has no other purpose but to serve as a place to press flowers, store documents or add a decorative touch to a room. John penned these words on the Isle of Patmos: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: For the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

The Bible gives us knowledge of our past, instruction for the present and our hope for the future. It is impossible to understand history, to explain today's news, or to evaluate tomorrow's events without the light of God's revelation found within the Bible. One minister visited a home and was speaking to a mother about her spiritual condition. "Oh", she said, "I am very religious." Then she instructed her little daughter to bring her the book that mommy loves so dearly. The little girl returned carrying the Sears catalogue. A little boy was helping his mom clean out a closet when he noticed a big black book on the back of a shelf. He asked his mom, "Whose book is that?" She said, "Oh", "That's God's book!" the little boy responded, "Shouldn't we give it back to him, we never read it." Some unknown individual wrote the following tribute to the Bible which I believe to be true: "This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Christ is its grand subject; our good is its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory,

See Parris, page 5A

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Talking SPLOST

Q. When does the voting begin for the SPLOST IV sales tax renewal?

A. Early voting will begin on Tuesday, Oct. 15th at the courthouse with the final voting day being Nov. 5th, (Election Day) where you will vote at your individual polling location. By the time you read this, the early voting should have already started.

Q. Will we be voting on a new tax?

A. No. This is simply a renewal of the 1 penny sales tax we have had for many years.

Q. Who should we contact if we would like to make a suggestion for a SPLOST sales tax project?

A. Contact the commissioner's office and let them know of your idea at (706) 439-6000.

Q. How much do out of town people contribute to our SPLOST sales tax?

A. The number of 30 percent to 40 percent has always been used, but I have no idea except to say that it is a significant amount of sales tax that people pay who do not live here, yet they help us pay for our county projects and infrastructure, keeping our property taxes at the 4th lowest rate in the State of Georgia out of 159 counties.

Q. Will the majority of the SPLOST revenue be used for county infrastructure and repayment of our Community Center?

A. Yes it will. We estimate that we will spend \$6 million dollars of our SPLOST revenue on roads and bridges alone, with approximately 3/4 of the total revenue going to pay for roads and bridges, public safety vehicles and equipment, county facility repairs and payments on the Union County Community Center.

Q. It was repeated to me that someone said they wondered how we would pay the operation cost of new projects that were completed with SPLOST funds, because every time we build something new, it would take more tax money, more upkeep and more employees. Is this really what happens?

A. No. While it is certainly true that a new building will cost additional funds to operate and in some cases may require additional employees, in most

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Waffle House Named Business of the Quarter

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce that Waffle House has been chosen as our Business of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2013. The Business of the Quarter program was established to recognize outstanding businesses and organizations that go above and beyond to serve the local community.

Waffle House is an active member of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. Businesses who partner with the Chamber not only do so for the well being of their own organization, but also for the well being of our local community. Waffle House has participated in many Chamber functions such as the Buy Local Weekend and Membership Meetings. They have contributed door prizes and even provided a complimentary breakfast to our members as part of our Member Orientation. Through their membership with the Chamber, Waffle House demonstrates a commitment to support local business.

Waffle House prides itself in serving good food fast. In Blairsville, they also have a

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Sopping Up the Soup

On my most recent trip to Italy (yeah, I'm going to mention it again.) my friend I couldn't help noticing that no one (yes, no one) that lived in the town had any extra poundage on them. Now, the bakeries are mobbed, the gelato shops are on every corner. Pizza is on every menu. Pasta is a staple. So with this influx of carbs, how do they do it?

Well, portion sizes have a great deal to do with it. Even pasta is served in portions less than half the size of Olive Garden. We ride across town in our gas guzzling SUV to the drive-up window to get our two giant scoops of ice cream. We order it on a waffle cone that is large enough to serve as an oil funnel on a Navy battleship. The Italians walk across town for their 1/2 cup of gelato, and stroll back home, again.

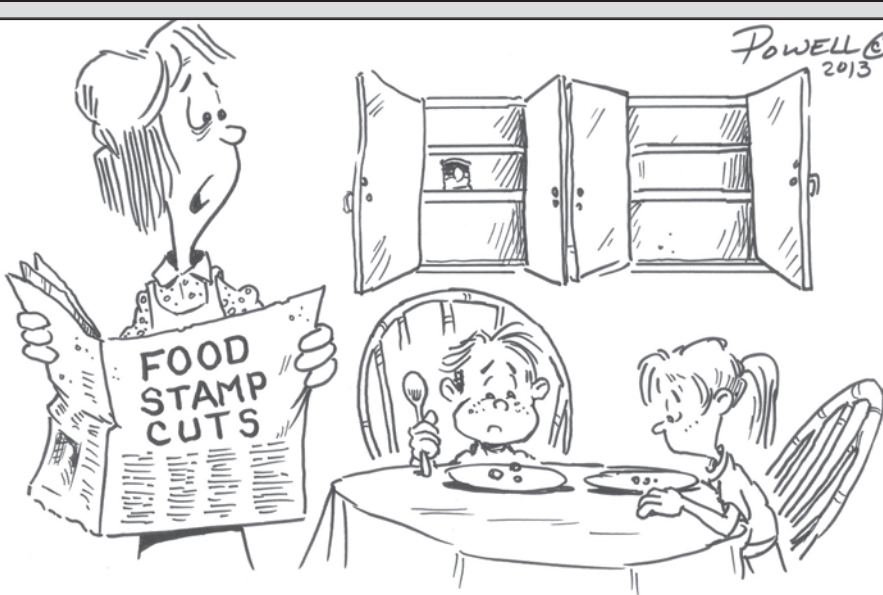
Every loaf of bread is a work of art in Italy. They are displayed in the windows, inviting you to come and pick the size, shape, and texture of the one you want to indulge in that day. And I mean "that day". There are no preservatives in this bread. And the semolina flour used is not the genetically manipulated and processed wheat we use in our baked goods.

Even more telling is that bread is used more as a utensil in Italy than it is a portion of your meal. At the end of the meal, Italians sop up the leftover sauce, juice from their tomato salad or the meat juices left on their plate with a crust of bread. We saw no butter or olive oil dipping plates in these Tuscan hills.

Bread is also used as a condiment to soup. Most Italian soups combine vegetables, beans and, sometimes protein, to form a hearty meal, and not just when the weather turns cold. Italians will eat soup every day, every season. Last year about this time, I shared my pizza soup recipe with you. I mentioned another recipe, and one of my readers has asked me on many of occasion to send it to her. Well, I'm sending it to everyone. It is one of my favorites. For those that want a vegetarian version, skip the sausage. For those of you that haven't acquired a taste for kale, you can use spinach, endive, turnip greens, (really any greens) in this recipe. And at the end of the recipe, I revisit "bread".

Italian Sausage, Beans and Greens Soup
1-1/2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped (1-1/2 cups)

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A clean slate

Dear Editor,

One of the success stories in education has been the Head Start Program. Now that seems to be voided without any attempt to save it.

Thank heaven for donors like Laura and John Arnold who are presently subsidizing six such programs.

In the meantime this program is now shown to be in jeopardy. What plans do the school board and officials propose to save it? Our proposed "Shutdown" is not a surprise.

Hopefully this is part of the "scare tactics" to highlight major problems in D.C.

It is also flagrantly punitive. Another tactic being used is barring the public from admittance to any of the national parks where admission has never been required.

Case in point: The monuments and statues in D.C. have always been available to the public. For example all war memorials, the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials in D.C.

Next we can expect the second floor if not the whole Congressional Library being closed to bar viewing of the Constitution. Can we then witness curtailing the distribution of all available material sent to the blind and partially sighted citizens that emanates from the Library of Congress?

Thousands of U.S. citizens travel over-

See Fiser, page 5A

What's next?

Dear Editor,

Since Georgia want to push bikers to getting license plates and register their bikes to be on the highways and bi-ways now, what about ATVs, Golf Carts, Go Carts, Scooters and especially Farm machinery and Road/Construction machinery as well? How many times have we get behind a tractor or hay baler going down the road and they WON'T pull over or attempt to get out of the way. Many times you have to follow them for awhile until you can get the chance to pass but very seldom. I have taken chances many times, dangerous chances around curves or over a hill after following for several miles because they just WON'T pull over, and hope and pray I can get across or around safely to the other side. Aren't there flat beds or truck haulers that pull behind trucks that they can haul them on like many do lawnmowers and trash and other stuff? Of course though, every time I mention any thing about this to any one, I seem to always get the same answer, "You wouldn't have any food though if it wasn't for the farm equipment... yada yada yada." But since when do human beings eat HAY?! But then many would probably say back, "You eat hamburgers though and the cows have to have something to eat don't they?" True they do, but, I am a vegetarian.

D. Barnes

The Funeral

My father is and has been a Baptist preacher for many years. About the time I moved to Athens to attend the University of Georgia my father was called to a church in Buena Vista, Georgia.

There was a family in the church which was faithful in their attendance and giving. However, the father was never in attendance. My father was told the father of the family had left them years earlier and moved to Florida with another woman. Many years later this man died and his family wanted to bring him back home to bury him.

My father was asked to preach this man's funeral. The day of the funeral Dad went to the funeral home before visitation began to meet with the family and the funeral director. The door was locked so Dad rang the doorbell. The door was answered by the funeral director. Dad said the man was dressed up like a butler. He opened the door and asked what my Dad needed. Dad explained that he was here to preach a funeral. The very professional, prim and proper butler invited my Dad into the building and led him down the hall to a private office. Dad and Mom were told to stay in the room until this man returned. As the funeral director left the room the doorbell rang once more. Quickly, the funeral director walked down the hall to answer the door. My father didn't know it, but, the Florida family of the dead man was at the door.

Dad said that he waited in the office for 20-30 minutes all the while he couldn't help hearing a heated discussion going on down the hall. After another 20 minutes Dad walked out of the office and down to the parlor where the dead man's visitation was supposed to take place. Dad looked into room and this man's Florida family was in the room and were removing the man from his casket. Dad hurriedly walked back down the hall to find the funeral director going into the office. The funeral director proceeded to scold my father for leaving the office to which he was assigned. Dad said, "Never mind me you better get down the hall and check on those people who are taking a man out of his casket". At this point the funeral director let out a scream and ran down the hall to check on this incident.

Dad and Mom followed to watch. The funeral director approached the family which had by this point removed the man from the coffin and were in the process of removing his clothing. The funeral director asked the family why they were removing the dead man's clothing. One of the man's sons said, "Daddy, never liked wearing his socks or underwear wrong side out. So, we are checking to make sure you

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West
Owner / Publisher

Charles Duncan
Editor

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Joe Collins
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Staff Writer

Website: www.nganews.com
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Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514



Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card.

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