

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### The Life and Lens of Walter Victor

He came into the office of the *Dawson News & Advertiser* one day asking for me. He said, "you want a real news story, let me tell you what Veterans Day means to me."

He was a spy man, and looked to be in his early 70s. His name was Walter Victor, and judging by the worn Atlanta Braves jacket, he was a big fan of the home team.

I listened to him, he had photos of when he served in World War II. He was a gunsmith in the service.

Victor served in the Ninth Infantry Division, he fought during the Normandy Invasion and Battle of the Bulge. He earned four Bronze Stars, eight Combat Stars and a Silver Star for his heroism.

Much to my surprise, after we talked about his military days, he told me he was 83 years old. He was a native of Pennsylvania, worked in the coal mines in his early days, but always had a love of taking photographs.

Also during our conversation, I asked him if he had ever been to a Braves game. "Been to one? I never miss a home game! I'm the team photographer. Follow me over to my house, and I'll show you some real photographs."

I took him up on the offer. Just past Rainbow Lake, there was Victor's home nestled in the hardwoods of Dawson County. He had photos of Ted Turner and the San Diego Chicken duking it out. Photos of Hank Aaron, Phil Niekro, Clete Boyer, Felipe Alou, and Felix Millan - all former Brave greats.

I felt like I was in the presence of a Rock Star. Victor and I became close friends. Along with my co-worker Bo Wilson, we took Victor to special events, Spring Training games in Orlando, Fla., Braves games at Turner Field, and even to Disney World.

Victor always had his camera with him. He took some shots of Bo and myself with former President Jimmy Carter, a close friend of Victor's.

We met all the Braves, Bobby Cox, Chipper Jones, John Smoltz, Tom Glavine, Paul Byrd and Greg Maddux. The list goes on - Victor was loved by all the Braves.

And the real facts - those Braves were about as down-to-earth as you could wish for and more. I did a series of stories from Spring Training. I did stories on Victor at Disney World, and I wrote a story about Victor's retirement from the Braves - at the age of 90. I even wrote a story about Victor's life-long love, Ruth Victor, as they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

I'm sharing all these memories with you be-

See Duncan, page 5A

#### Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



### Longhorn Rhetoric

During these final days before the election most voters are as confused as a termite in a yo-yo. The closer to Election Day the more muddled the messages become. It is hard to pen down some politicians on any issue. Could it be that most of them are afraid to speak straight forward?

It reminds me of an old story that has circulated for years. The author is unknown but the story goes like this: "There was an old fashioned lady who was very modest and very delicate in her language. She and her husband were planning a vacation to Florida, so she wrote to a camp manager for a reservation. She wanted to make sure that the campground provided full facilities, but she didn't know how to inquire about bathroom facilities. She was so shy that she could not bring herself to write the word "toilet" in her letter. She considered several words and finally settled on the term "bathroom commode." However, when she read her letter aloud she thought bathroom commode was too forward so she rewrote her letter and just wrote "BC" to refer to bathroom commode. When the campground director received the letter he was stumped by the question which read, "Does your camp have its own "BC?" This was a real mystery to him. He could not determine what the lady was referring to. After sharing the letter with other campers and mulling over it for several days he finally concluded that she was asking about the location of the Baptist Church. His reply read as follows: "I regret the delay in answering your letter, but I now take great pleasure to inform you that a BC is located nine miles north of our campground and is capable of seating 250 people. It is situated in a beautiful pine grove and is open only on Sundays and Wednesdays. I realize that's quite a distance if you are in the habit of going regularly. I understand that a number of people carry their lunch and make a day of it. In fact, our daughter met her husband at the BC. I would advise you to arrive early because the last time my wife and I went; it was so crowded we had to stand up the whole time. Sometimes there are so many people they have three to a seat. However, they do have a supper planned to raise funds to buy more seats. Additional seating would provide a lot of relief. It pains me very

#### It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



See Parris, page 5A

### Questions and Answers

**Q. Are there any other SPLOST projects that we have to make adjustments on because of lack of funding or other reasons?**

A. Yes, the jail. For example, we had one project listed as Jail Renovation and Expansion. Back in 2007 when we started planning SPLOST III, two years before SPLOST III actually began, the jail was extremely overcrowded and it was growing with new inmates each year. Methamphetamine was the drug of choice and arrests related to it were a large reason for the overcrowding of our jail.

**Q. Since our jail was only built and occupied in 2002, why is it already overcrowded?**

A. Our new jail had been grossly underbuilt and underfunded, and we saw no way except to try to expand the jail to keep up with the increasing inmate population. However, with the subsequent downswing of the meth problem and better cycling of prisoners through the legal system with the assistance of the DA and Judges, and Sheriff Mason, we have not needed to spend the millions of dollars on the jail expansion, which would have also required hiring many new employees.

**Q. Is there any reason to expand our jail at this time?**

A. Absolutely not. Do we still have some crowding problems? Yes. But they are manageable and it is much less expensive to board some of them occasionally at another county jail at about half the cost of keeping them ourselves rather than building a jail addition where there is inadequate property for that purpose.

**Q. Are there other costs associated with expanding our jail?**

A. Oh, heck yes. Not the least of which is the cost of many new jail employees, which could not be paid out of SPLOST but would require property tax increases. Because our current jail was built on the side of a mountain with no expansion room, the only area available for expansion is enclosing the small recreation cell-block. It would cost over a \$1 million and would only handle 16 additional beds. Then you have the problem of how to give the inmates outdoor recreation. The only other area remaining is adjacent to the jail and is where the entire electrical grounding matting field

#### Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

## Letters to the Editor ...

### Open letter of thanks to the people of Union County

To the great folks of Union County, In February 2013 I was blessed to take a job at the UGA Mountain Research and Education Center. I relocated my family from Tifton where I was born and raised. My wife and me were concerned how this was going to work out due to having a very young family; all three of our kids being school age. Any fears we had were quickly extinguished, as we all were welcomed to this community with open arms. The kids even came home from school after the first week exclaiming that they were in heaven at the Union County Schools. How fortunate is that? Coming from a small town, I understand the small town feel and the closeness that you get with your community, but never have I felt what we felt upon settling in Blairsville. We are blessed to have some of the biggest hearted, charitable, friendly people that I have ever come across. We have a beautiful, clean community and everyone is always willing to help out their neighbor when in need.

The past year and a half have been the happiest and fulfilling of my life due to being here in Blairsville; I am fortunate to work with some of the greatest people in the county at the UGA Center. And I get to interact with a great number of other people in the community due to my position at the Center.

See Mullis, page 5A

### Tale of the Tape

Dear Editor, As a grateful recipient of Meals on Wheels, I am occasionally furnished with printed matter as a guide to better nutrition for the elderly.

For the month of October, we were given "October: Eating Right When Money is Tight," containing many hints for eating on a lean budget. Last but not least was: "Always pay attention at the check-out. Make sure prices ring up correctly."

With vision and hearing diminishing, I rarely checked the register tape that came with my purchases, more or less assuming that the right price was rung up. But, as the brochure advised, I started checking and was disturbed to find that mistakes were made, and not to my benefit. It is not the checker or the computer that is in error, it is the person that enters the price in the computer. My suggestion to everyone, check your register tapes; all stores make occasional errors.

Sincerely, Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

### Good Samaritans

Dear Editor, Last Thursday, my wife and her widowed friend, (senior citizens), were driving home to Blairsville from Cumming on Georgia 400, when they got a flat tire with no spare tire. They were at a loss of what to do. They pulled into a gas station where two Mexican men were on their lunch break from a painting job. They saw the flat tire and offered to help. They bought a tire patch kit, used their own jack and tools to get the tire off and found a hole in the tire. They patched it, filled it with air, and replaced the tire. They refused any money and had to be forced to take even a small token.

This is one story of the "aliens" among us. I wonder how many white Christians passed by on this day. I am a Vietnam veteran, I judge people by their actions. Maybe more people should rethink their prejudiced attitudes.

Albert Wiedrich



### Two-Wheeled Terror on the Highways

Dear Editor, On Sunday, Sept. 28th, I experienced one of the most harrowing days ever on our mountain roads. On this day, the drive from Blairsville to Helen, which normally takes about 30 minutes, stretched out to over an hour.

Having made this trip hundreds of times before did not begin to prepare me for facing an onslaught of what seemed like thousands of crazed bicyclists. The event they were participating in seemed to be rather well-organized, because a number of road signs had been erected for the benefit of the riders. After researching this event, it appears that there were actually three rides taking place: the Six Gap Century Ride (104 miles), the Three Gap Fifty Ride (58 miles), and the Valley Ride (35 miles). These rides included the following highways and roads: 19, 60, 75, Alt 75, 129, 180, 348, Black Mountain Rd., and Yahoola Rd., which made it virtually impossible to travel South of Blairsville without having to battle with bicyclists.

The first group of two-wheeled terrors I encountered was when I entered a curve and came face-to-face with 50-60 cyclists riding about eight abreast and occupying both sides of the road. I slammed on my brakes and narrowly avoided colliding with a number of the brightly dressed riders.

See Rutishauser, page 5A

### Time for concern

Dear Editor, When the world has come to this point in history of ridiculous politics, racism, and injustice there is only one thing that can be done. Nothing we say nor any acts of good faith will do any good for humanity now with all these unjust laws and regulations. So... that leaves one simple resolution... stock up, find deep woods or a commune/reservation that you know is safe from natural forces, big government and these evil entities. Hide your symptoms of colds from doctors, they will turn you in to big government for possible ebola infection or other contracting diseases, then you are "watched and observed without knowing" or "detained to one of these 20 camps," less you wish to become an occupant of the many "disease control centers" set up by the C.D.C. (Center for Disease Control) to "control" the possible spread of these. Those put there become lab rats for vaccines and other drugs, possibly even becoming biofied.

We, the people have a right to prolong our lives and live in peace and harmony with Mother Earth and those around us; regardless of disease, ailments, mental, psychological or physical disorders. We are spirits! We are eternal! We are part of the collective consciousness that makes this whole world spin! Do not let them deceive you!

The time is now to step up... not to rebel, See DeGoyler, page 5A

### John and Champ

My great-great grandfather was John Cummings. In some respects he was a good man. He was hard working and industrious. He founded a saw mill, grist mill and black smith shop on his farm just above Cummings Creek in north western Alabama in the 1880s. John was 6 feet 5 inches tall and weighed about 250 pounds. John loved to eat and he also drank heavily. Many men in the local community were afraid of John, especially one of the local moonshiners. This man had sold John some bad whiskey and John had threatened to destroy the man's still.

Another fellow in the community also had a reputation as a fighting man. Champion West may have weighed 150 pounds. But, he was not 6 feet tall. He was called Champ because he never lost a fight. The moonshiner who had sold John the bad whiskey began carrying tales between Champ West and John Cummings. The two men became angry with one another and soon met in the road on the way to Phil Campbell, Alabama. Champ looked up at John sitting astride of his big white horse and said, "John Cummings, I aim to give you a whipping". John hopped off the horse and the two men began to fight. The two fought for 20 minutes. They tired and sat down for a few minutes to rest, but, then fought another 20 minutes. John looked at Champ and asked, "Have you had enough"? All 150 pounds of Champ West and the 250 pound John Cummings called it a draw. However, Champ told John "I'll never fight a big man again. I will shoot a man before I let him beat me to a pulp again".

These two men knew the moonshiner had told lies about them. So, they went to his house and taught him a lesson. Over time Champ West and John Cummings became close friends. They even partnered up to make moonshine together. The still was located next to Cummings Creek and at the bottom of a bluff. This bluff had a hole through the rock where Indians had stored grain. The hole was tunnel led through the rock and into a crack through which a man could climb to the top of the bluff. The hole was covered with brush. John had an old terrier dog that would not bark. The dog would only growl deeply when a stranger approached. And the dog was always at John's side. John told his grandkids, "There were many a time that old dog would growl and then me and Champ would crawl through the hole in the rock and up through the crack to the top of the bluff. We always covered the hole up with brush when we left. Then we would sit on top of the bluff to watch the revenuers tear up our still". The two men never got caught making moonshine.

John and his partner Champ forged a See Cummings, page 5A

#### Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



## The 10 Organizational Myths of Chambers of Commerce - Part 2

Let's continue from last week with the top myths surrounding the Chamber of Commerce.

Myth 4: The Chamber's main focus is downtown businesses.

Reality: As with Myth #1 from last week, I can understand why there might be confusion on this topic. The public sees us working closely with the Downtown Development Authority and the City of Blairsville and makes an assumption that downtown is our only concern. However, that is not true. Again, we deeply value a strong partnership with these entities and believe that in order to adequately serve our members, we must be "present at the table" when groups such as the DDA and others are meeting and making decisions for the good of the county. What happens in downtown directly impacts what happens countywide. Article after article and study after study will prove this. Therefore, it is correct to assume that we have a genuine interest in downtown, but every-

thing we offer as a Chamber, we offer to all of our members.

Myth 5: The Chamber of Commerce is the same as the Union County Development Authority.

Reality: In Union County, we are fortunate to have two distinct organizations whose pur-

See Williams, page 6A

#### Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



### Families

Often, I write about my family in this column. My biological family. I was conceived when the stars were lined up in perfect unison, casting me in a glow that my parents found irresistible, and plucked me out of the stratosphere to be their first born.

I lucked out. If the light was a little dimmer, some other folks might have picked me, instead. I would have learned to line dance instead of tap dance, sang Johnny Cash songs instead of Sinatra tunes and maybe been a coal miners daughter instead of the child of a jazz pianist.

I won't lie to you and tell you we have been the perfect family unit, nor will I be tedious on all the blessings bestowed upon me as part of this genetic unit. Let it suffice to say that I feel graced to have been born and raised to those who loved me first, and always.

Maybe because of the fact that I had such good fortune with my first family, I decided somewhere very young, that having more families would be even better. I was the kid that ingratiated herself into everyone's hearts and made myself "at home", as if I was their kid, grandkid, or sibling. I didn't necessarily expect anything from these adopted families. I more wanted to give them love because I instinctively knew that the heart had an amazing capacity to stretch. And I've always been one to see how far the limits of anything can be extended. (Some of you may remember how my first turtle met his demise. RIP, Mr. Turtle. Your neck had a limit.)

In the past two years, I've had reunions with so many of my adopted families. There have been high school and college reuniting, Facebook reunions, wedding receptions and unfortunately memorial services, too. Each time I'm reminded how the energy that was spent weaving heartstrings was so efficient, creating a braid so often more permanent than we can ever imagine at the time we originally had twined. These re-encounters give each of us an opportunity to express just how much we meant to one another at the time we were an integral part of each other's lives. We laugh at the crazy memories, cry at the subsequent losses and often share what still is to be accomplished in our lives. We

See Leone, page 5A

#### Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



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