

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Wishing you a Very Merry Christmas

I've always thought that Blairsville and Union County did Christmas right. And, that's still my way of thinking today.

I grew up here, spent my early adult years here, and have been lucky enough to come back home.

It warms my heart to see local law enforcement taking an active role in making Christmas a special time for young people.

Shop With A Cop, Shop With A Cruiser and the Sheriff's Office's Give A Gift Christmas make a tremendous impact for those less fortunate.

These programs remind me of what growing up here means. Union County and Blairsville are among the most giving communities in the country. This community gives back to its own.

Sheriff Mack Mason remembers what it was like to grow up here. He remembers those *Hard Candy Christmas* days. He remembers when an apple, orange and a few pieces of chocolate candy and hard candy made up Christmas for young folks.

So does Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll. Chief Carroll remembers when a hand-me-down gift was the most exciting present a kid could come by in the days of his youth and growing up here.

Wayne Tanner of the Blairsville Cruisers also remembers the tough times and growing up here. Holidays were enjoyed with the surroundings of family.

Wayne is family, so, I understand his way of thinking.

Today, Christmas means the same as it did when we were kids. Jesus is still the reason for the season. A little help for Santa Claus doesn't hurt either as BPD, Union County Sheriff's Office and the Cruisers still emphasize.

Making a difference in our community is still just as special today as it was 50 years ago. And we're proud of all the folks that step up during the holidays and make a child's world just a little more special.

This community has made a tremendous impact for more than 300 children in 2014. It warms my heart to know that my hometown still remembers how to celebrate the holidays.

It is better to give than receive, and for all that you do, we wish this community, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in 2015.

#### Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



### Great Joy To All People

The heart of Christmas is not about shopping and sales, but about a Savior and singing. It is about angelgrams and arrivals. Christmas signals the arrival of hope... peace... and joy.

Joy is not the same thing as happiness. Happiness is based upon "happencence" or what happens to you. For one to be happy the circumstances have to be right. Happiness may depend upon the weather, wealth, health and a thousand other things. What makes one happy differs from individual to individual and changes from day to day. What makes one happy today may be boring tomorrow. Joy, on the other hand, is an internal quality that is not altered by external events and is eternal in nature. I know that some of you are saying, "Man, you are crazy." To the world there is no such thing. But I want you to know that "great joy" is for all people (Luke 2:10). As you read this you may be sick, even in the hospital, you may live in a dysfunctional family, you may be unemployed; you may have lost a loved one in death; the weather may be miserable to you; you may be like the shepherds, your job may stink; you may be out in the cold, etc. However, in spite of all of the bad things that you can number, God wants you to possess His joy. When Christ entered this world He came to bring "Great Joy" to ALL people.

For many, life is a meaningless mediocrity or a daily drudgery of existence. Masses of people live dull, drab, depressing and dissatisfying lives never knowing that there is something better. Christ came that your joy may be full and that your joy may last forever (John 15:11). To have joy you must ask Jesus to come into your life (John 16:24). You see, joy is not some kind of prescription that can be condensed into a pill and sold in a bottle. Rather, joy arrives in your heart when you make room for the person of Christ to live through you. One fellow who was a brand new Christian used the word "hallelujah" a lot which irritated some of his friends. One of them said to him, "I bet you don't even know what 'hallelujah' means?" He said, "Yes, I do. It means, 'hot dog, this is it.'" You see joy is uninhibited by people, problems, powers or pressures from within or without. Joy is

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#### It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



### Questions and Answers

#### Q. What do you consider some of the highlights of 2014 in Union County?

A. 2014 was a very good year. Number one, the national economy started to make a comeback with new job numbers, continued lowering of the unemployment rate and stock market numbers at an all-time high at least gives us encouragement that the economy is rebounding. Locally, our Farmers Market was once again hugely successful, as well as the cannery. We finished building a new addition to the market with 23 new spaces which promptly filled with vendors. We moved a food concession in at the market and began having a food vendor and the canning plant broke all of its previous records. Large crowds in the thousands attended each week so it could not have been a better season.

#### Q. Were there other successes?

A. Absolutely. The Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center, managed and operated by the Byron Herbert Reece Society, had another good year with many community events and improvements made during the year. At Meeks Park, we completed a new entrance off the old Blue Ridge Highway near the Nottely River bridge and we are currently in the process of completing a kayak/canoe launch at the river along with a new, shorter, walking trail with convenient access. We are also working on the restoration/reconstruction of the old Tate Grist Mill at the Park. We had the first baseball season with the new grassed infields in the three upper ball fields.

#### Q. Were all of these projects done with SPLOST money?

A. Yes. In addition to the projects listed above we have also completed the following with SPLOST funds: Purchased the gun range property along Hwy 515 and are in the design stages; Started amphitheater design; Renovations at the old nursing home building; Purchased property above the Byron Herbert Reece Heritage Center; Purchased property near the Horse Arena to be eventually used as a trash "convenience center"; Installed courthouse security equipment; Paved roads with LMIG money help; Began work with a GDOT Off-System Safety Improvement grant updating some road signs and striping to new safety standards. In

#### Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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## Letters to the Editor ...

### Thank You to Public Employees

Dear Editor,

During a 42-year absence from North Georgia for schooling and work, I was privileged to travel and/or live in 14 foreign nations and 40 U.S. states. When compared with those places, I am increasingly convinced that our local public employees and dedicated volunteers are among the best anywhere. So to all of you who work providing a service for the rest of us, a hearty "Thank You" for all that you do. Whether you protect our safety, treat our illnesses, educate us, stock and circulate reading materials, maintain roads and public buildings, keep records, rescue abandoned and neglected pets, do administration or some other duty, you are doing a great job and providing valuable services. Keep up the good work!

At the risk of appearing biased I must single out the road department. Through the outstanding work of Tony Henderson and others whose names I don't know, roads in our community are the best maintained of anywhere I have ever been. Good work by county employees is complemented by probationers who mow and

See Gibson, page 5A

### Never Forget

Dear Editor,

In the end it was a close vote, 219-206. By "working together" "across the aisle" the House of Representatives passed the CRomnibus bill to fund the government for the next year. Passage in the Senate is expected next week.

The Republican Speaker of the House, John Boehner enlisted the help of President Obama to get it passed. Our Congressman, Doug Collins voted YES. I have a few questions for the good people of the 9th District.

When you went to the polls and overwhelmingly voted to re-elect Representative Collins a little more than a month ago, were you voting to continue the policies of the President? Were you voting to fund Obamacare? Were you voting for pages and pages of pork contained in a 1774 page bill that no one could have had the time to read? Were you voting for bank bail-outs? For business as usual? Well, if you were, congratulations! Your congressman delivered for you!

"But the Republicans can't do anything until they have the Senate" is one mantra. Well, thanks to this bill Obama won't have to worry about funding most of his programs next year.

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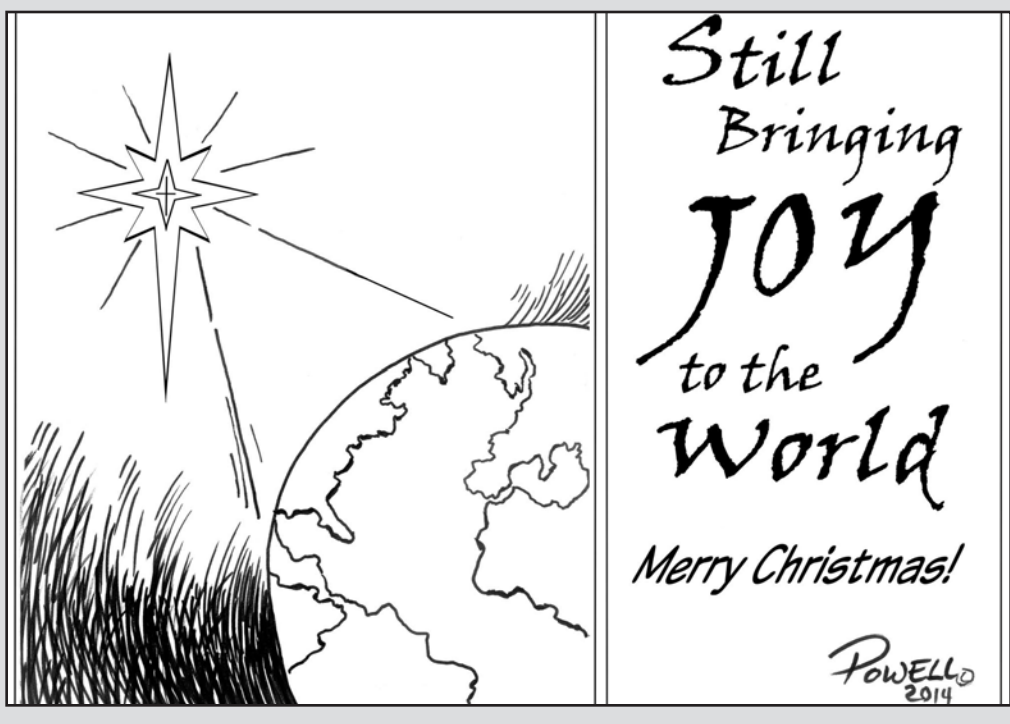
### Freedom of Speech

Dear Editor,

I'm confused about the hullabaloo over Sony bowing to pressure not to show their film because it would offend North Korea's Kim Jung il, (which it probably would, since it shows that country's leader in the role of a buffoon who has his head blown off). The public outcry about Sony's bowing to pressure has many people all upset, because they think Sony should not have given in to the pressure of Freedom of Speech.

However, last week, right here in our own hometown, one lone woman was able to have my book removed from a local gift shop because it offended her. Unlike the Sony movie, my book is not violent in any way, nor did it make accusations or have any questionable actions in it, and it didn't threaten a jihad on them if they didn't read it; rather, from the dozens of letters I've received from readers over the years, it gave them hope, encouragement and offered an opportunity to rethink their own lives from a different perspective. The woman was offended by one objectionable word in my title, "An Ordinary Life—Touched by an Extraordinary God." There's that offensive word! The woman could have purchased any one of dozens of other

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### No Respect

Dear Editor,

Today (December 11, 2014) will be one month since our family lost our dear brother Jim (James Derflinger) it has been a difficult time for his family and will be for many days to follow. My brother was a kind and giving man that loved his country and his family. He was a veteran of the United States Air force, worked for Pan Am for thirty years and lost his employment there as many others did when they closed. He then worked for the Fort Lauderdale Police Department from which he retired and moved to your beautiful town.

So it is with great sadness to me and many others to learn that someone recently who was so unkind to have gone to his grave and burned a letter and left on his marker a gift that had been given, along with ashes and charred pieces of paper. The family knows who this person is and I will only say shame on you, you had no right to do this on his grave... if bitterness consumes you I am sorry. But why did you feel the need to desecrate his grave. You may not have loved him but there are many of us who did and we are still grieving from our loss...you did not hurt my brother; you did that while he was alive... you hurt his wife, sisters and many others who

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### And the circle is finding its way to completion once again

Dear Editor,

Out of the declining prosperity of our country the seed of collapse is germinating once again. The expansion of the power of the larger government and the loss of power of the people has slowed our progress to a halt while competition abroad flourishes and our prosperity declines as it is sent to foreign lands. Our leadership has taken in diversity far faster than it can assimilate with those who have no inkling of how their new world is structured and vote blindly for government financial support. Our markets are being lost, our treasury exhausted and our currency debased. The cost of goods seems now above the earning rate and credit which is usury now fills the gap between earnings and commodities. Our taxes can no longer stem the tide and as in times past will be increased as spending rates still farther out of control. No economic stamanship is appearing to stem the oncoming tide of collapse which may result in this great land becoming an appendage of another world power. That, which was once the greatest of democracies, a Christian land, may see its freedom fading as the wisdom of our forefathers is put aside. It seems we tell the world the value of democracy while pushing it away.

Our sense of liberty, which once came from a vibrant and active leadership, is fading into disillusionment. The suspicion of the peo-

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### John's Christmas Gifts

Christmas brings back many memories to each of us. Christmas brings memories of various gifts of which I received through the years. I can remember getting stockings stuffed with all kinds of goodies. For example, I love tangerines to this day because my grandmother used to give them to me at Christmas. And I remember getting those candied orange slices at Christmas. I also remember getting those soft peppermint sticks at Christmas each year.

The Christmas of 1970 was a Christmas that will always be special to me. That particular Christmas things changed around our house. My dad had always been a man who loved his family, but, he also drank heavily, swore often, and had a vile temper. But on Christmas Day in 1970 Dad met the "Reason for the Season" and his life completely changed. After that day I haven't heard one curse word come out of Dad's mouth. Nor have I seen him take any kind of drink. And when he gets angry there is still a calm demeanor about him. I think that Christmas changed my Dad and his entire family.

My grandparents celebrated Christmas by decorating Cedar Trees and by answering the phone with a special greeting. The day after Thanksgiving my grandmother would greet telephone callers with "Christmas Gift" instead of hello. She told me that as a youngster she would go with large groups of people to serenade their neighbors. The group of people would begin the serenade by saying "Christmas Gift" and then the group would sing a Christmas Carol to their neighbor. The neighbors would respond by tossing hard candy to the group after the song.

Just after the turn of the century my grandfather's family experienced some hard times. My grandfather was only about 4 years old when his uncle joined the Army and went to fight in WWI where he was one of the last cavalrymen to ride into battle on a horse. Lum Cummings survived the war and lived through 2 separate gas attacks. Then the influenza epidemic came through North Alabama and two of my grandfather's aunts died while in their teens. Next, Papa's youngest uncle was accidentally shot while playing with an old pistol. These problems placed a strain on the marriage of my great-great grandparents, John and Martha Cummings. I don't know exactly what happened, but, John left his wife of more than 20 years, ran off with another woman. The Cummings family in Alabama became extremely bitter.

Some of John's sons never forgave him for the destruction of their family. He came back for a couple of visits, but, a couple of his sons would have nothing to do with him. But, time has a way of healing many sore spots. As the years went by John became more and more feeble.

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#### Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



## LIFE FORCE: Saving lives by air since 1988

Chestate/Chattahoochee RC&D Council's mission is to help the citizens in the 13 northeast Georgia counties that it serves by providing programs and information that will help make life in



their communities better and improve the standard of living for all.

Recently our regular countywide training for the volunteers in the Towns Fire Rescue was about an emergency service that most citizens will never use, but for those whose lives depend on quick, specialized medical care it is a life saver because many times people in critical condition can't wait to be transported by highway to a medical trauma center.

The program was presented by Life Force, a medical helicopter ambulance service connected to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga. There are other air medical services that serve north Georgia, but one of our own, Greg Taylor, works as a flight medic for Life Force, and presented the program about the services they offer and landing zone procedures to our first responders. The air crew that Greg works with is based in Mineral Bluff near Blue Ridge and is one of the helicopter bases that are spread around the Chattanooga area so that most people in a 150 mile radius are within reach of a helicopter ambulance in a matter of 30 minutes or so which could mean

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## Some of My Favorite Things

The Union County Farmers Market family had another wonderful year. We added thirty new booths, a Market Café and expanded the parking, as well as our reach, marketing throughout the Southeast. With all this, our attendance swelled.

If I close my eyes and imagine walking through the three buildings on a Saturday morning this summer, a wave of my favorite things flood my senses. Won't you take a stroll with me? I'll introduce you to some of the family.

Oh Loy, those pork rinds are so good, especially warm out of the vat. First the crunch, then the melt in your mouth with just a hint of garlic, or do I want the dill seasoned today? Yes, Poppa and Linda, I am on my way over, because the smell of the cinnamon sugar coating of those roasted nuts is going to drive me crazy.

Good morning, Paul, you adorable little gnome and talented woodworker. I hear your cackle. You just told another joke didn't you? You are such a storyteller. Bobby, wait up. Did you hear that they needed toilet paper in the ladies restroom again, and someone is at the office needing change for \$100. Thanks, Bobby. You are the best. Don't know what we'd do without you.

Eleanor, what do you mean you are out of Chow-Chow? You only brought 20 cakes and 4 cases of pickles and chow this week? Seriously woman, you are slack octogenarian. Hoyt, up in the heavens- your ladies miss you, but they are here, every week, strong, smiling, along with their friends Michelle and Toni, holding down the fort of crafters that surround the office area with sunshine.

Oh, the man amongst those ladies? That's David, he's our pain reliever, with magic hands and a warm, genuine smile. If he's not giving a neck massage, you'll find him over getting coffee from Deb and Peg, who sell amazing sweets... but David doesn't do sugar. Now, next to Deb and Peg is Michael. Michael does sugar, big time! He also sells the most beautiful hanging baskets. It's how he affords his sugar addiction.

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