

Opinions

Everybody has one

A family tradition

For those who wonder about the days of old, it only takes attending a family reunion to whet one's appetite.

Sunday marked one of the oldest family reunions in Union County history.

The Reece Family Reunion dates back generation after generation, 1931 was the first.

The Reunion is kept alive by the spirit of Alice Eliza Louise Reece, better known to me as "Aunt Alice" Hayes, who lived in the Owl-town District, not far from her beloved Shady Grove Methodist Church.

Aunt Alice's dream came to life this week as *William Reece of Wales And his Descendants*, published in Raleigh, NC, hit the family's hands.

The book is a compilation of photographs and histories of the Reece family, a book that began with Aunt Alice and was completed by Bill Honaker, a member of the Reece Family through marriage.

Of course, those who know Bill, understand that he's as much a Reece as if the Family blood flowed through his veins.

The most interesting aspect of the entire book is that this clan branched out from one man, Valentine "Fella" Reece, the only child of William Reece of Wales and his wife Mary.

The Family line grew from there, as Valentine "Fella" Reece and his wife Christina had nine children.

The line created by this historic mountain couple, includes a Pulitzer Prize-nominated poet and a veteran journalist who finally found his way back home to become editor of the *North Georgia News*, in Blairsville, and *Towns County Herald*, in Hiwassee.

It also includes veterans of every major war this country has ever had to fight. On Sunday, at the House of Prayer Family Life Center, the Clan Reece gathered once again, as the rites of August continued in this mountain community.

I speak so fondly of the Reece Family simply because, they are so near and dear to my heart.

You see, the Reece blood does flow through my veins. It's the source of the writing talent in our family, or so I'm told. It's also the source of the work ethic that puts so many of our spouses on edge.

The legacy of the Reece Family goes back to 1709, and includes William Reece of Wales, his son, Valentine "Fella" Reece, my great-great-great-great grandfather, Quiller Frank Reece my great-great grandfather, his son, James Roberson Reece, my "Poppy" and his daughter, Mary Eliza "Doll" Reece Potts, my "Granny," and her daughter, Mary Lavona Potts Duncan, my "Momma."

"Dolly" as my Paw Paw called her, would read me bedtime stories about the wild West.

See *Duncan*, page 5A

County Finances

Q. Someone told me last week that the county is in severe debt and that we would not be able to pay our bills. Is that correct?

A. Nothing could be further from the truth. Union County is and always has been in excellent financial condition. It is the election season and you will probably hear lots of false rumors and accusations between now and November. I have answered this question a couple of times before, but will repeat some questions from an earlier column this year about county finances. If you hear anything you have a concern about, PLEASE call my office at 706-897-4761 or email me at unioncounty@uniongov.com and we will get you a quick (and correct) answer.

Q. What is Union County's current financial position?

A. As it always has been, Union County is in excellent financial condition. The auditors have been in our county almost daily for three and a half months. We expect our final audit report to be ready within thirty (30) days. The auditors have all of our financial information and we have no control over when it will be presented. We do expect our audit to once again (12 years in a row) be excellent.

Q. We heard a rumor that the county has never paid off the SPLOST II debts from 2008. Is this true?

A. This also is absolutely UNTRUE as are most of the uninformed comments coming from the internet. Union County fully paid off all SPLOST debts (\$ 5 million) from the 2004-2008 SPLOST II on time and as planned with the final payment being made August 1st, 2009. It can not be much clearer than this!!!

Q. Does the county owe any money on the SPLOST sales tax projects?

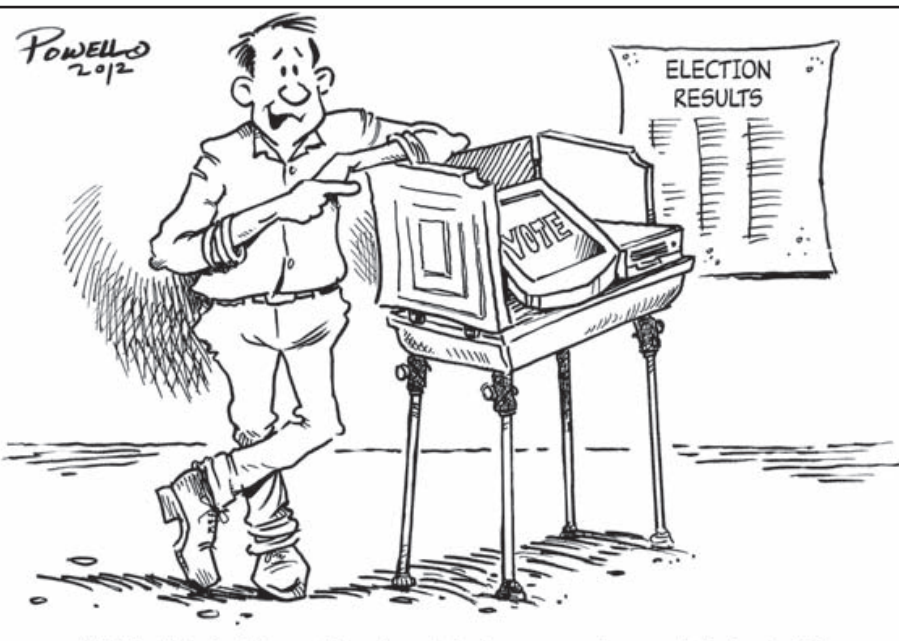
A. Yes. SPLOST III began March of 2009 (thru March 2015) and the county bonded (borrowed) \$ 5 million dollars to cover the cost of part of the SPLOST III projects. This included the fire engines and soon the fire station expansion, purchase of property at Meeks Park and two new bridges, toddler playground, library expansion, horse arena, farmers market, canning plant, civic center rehab with expanded parking, rubber floor gym rehab, community center in Suches, recreation offices at school and parking expansion, old historic courthouse elevator, restoration of old Choestoe school house, and probably a few I have missed.

The county puts back this payment monthly to cover the yearly bond payment and this debt will be paid in full at the end of our

See *Paris*, page 5A



Charles Duncan
Straight Shooting



"It's high time the legislators met our lobbyist!"

A Whole Lot of Pulling Going On

Dentists are not the only ones doing a lot of pulling these days. Both democrats and republicans are pulling out all the stops.

Instead of using their resources to pull this nation together they seem to be pulling out of thin air every dirty, destructive and damaging thing they can come up with to pull us apart.

What has happened to "pulling together?" The question that used to be asked was, "Who are you pulling for in the election?" "What team are you pulling for, etc.?"

Nowadays, it is "Who are you pulling against?" What has happened to representation? From rural townships, to large cities and to the nation's capital we have elected officials who evidently think that they have the ultimate power to say whether a chicken restaurant can locate in their city, whether a mother can breast feed or bottle feed her child; whether you can buy popcorn in a movie theater and whether it can be buttered or not; what foods you can eat and how much; and what you can drink and how many ounces. Personally, I think some of these governors, mayors, senators, representatives, etc., have pulled a muscle in their brain.

In my opinion, the grass roots of America need to pull the plug on their power and flat pull the rug out from under them along with their outrageous salaries and exorbitant retirements.

There doesn't seem to be any "underdogs" in politics anymore. They all want to be "big dogs". Most of us like to pull for the underdog, but it is hard to pull for a big dog. Some of these big dogs need to be put on a leash and pulled in.

Decades ago when I started to school there were a few teachers who would pull your ear to get you to listen, or some kid behind you who wanted to pull your hair; I didn't like my ear pulled, nor my hair pulled and I resent anyone, anywhere who thinks they can pull the wool over my eyes. But to be honest and frank

See *Parris*, page 5A

A Chamber Program- Youth Leadership Union

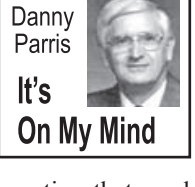
When I was in high school, I didn't think specifically about leadership. However, the youth program that made a difference in my life had Leadership Training as a major part. It may seem that limited opportunities exist for our youth today, but I can assure you, those opportunities do exist. One such opportunity I want to share today is our Chamber of Commerce Youth Leadership Union program sponsored by Community & Southern Bank.

Youth Leadership Union is one of several programs offered by the Chamber. The Chamber staff, Board members, and members at large collaborate to create an incredible experience for our youth. Youth Leadership Union helps to develop the knowledge and skills of the participants to become our leaders of tomorrow. Participants must attend school in Union County or live in Union County. They must demonstrate outstanding character and desire to make an impact in their community through involvement in business organizations, civic clubs, churches, and/or other extra-curricular activities. We seek participants who are honest, have integrity, dependability and a concern for others.

During the 7-week program, participants will better understand the foundations of leadership, develop a sense of community by working as a team, and gain valuable life-long skills such as wardrobe, formal dining etiquette, and public speaking. Participants will be selected based on information provided in a written application, teacher reference, and personal interview. Guidelines include being in the 10th or 11th grade this fall. Academic achievements, responsibilities, participation in school functions and organizations complete the requirements. If selected, participation is expected by attending all sessions.

Applications are available through the Chamber of Commerce and online at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com and clicking on Chamber Programs. Applications must be turned in to the Chamber of Commerce, Community & Southern Bank, or a school counselor by Thursday, August 23. I would like to express my appreciation to Community & Southern Bank who has been our longstanding partner and sponsor for this event and to Kristen Stroud who is serving as this year's Chair of the Youth Leadership Union Committee.

Should you need additional information on Youth Leadership Union, please call 706-745-5789 or visit our website at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com. I can be reached any time at Chair@BlairsvilleChamber.com.



Danny Parris
It's On My Mind



Mickey Cummings
Around The Farm

Will I be Remembered?

One of the things that people ask themselves as they age is, "Will I be remembered?" All of us want to be remembered for something. Sometimes we are memorialized for things we wished people would forget. When I was younger I attended some schools and had some teachers that will always remember me. I attended Trapptown School for a short time as a 2nd grader. My grandfather's cousin was my teacher. My grandfather was my bus driver. So, there were many days in which I was in trouble before I even got home.

Miss Cummings was the kindest, gentlest teacher I ever knew. Miss Cummings would look at me over her black rimmed glasses and ask, "Mickey Paul, do I need to talk to your Papa about your behavior?" When I heard the words "Mickey Paul" I knew I was in trouble. Later this same year I began to weary of being picked on by our class bully. In those days our school was small and there were 5 grades of kids in the same classroom. This bully was a 5th grader and I was only in the 2nd grade. One particular day we learned about magnifying glasses.

I was pretty good at science and caught on quickly. It wasn't long before I learned that a magnification glass would concentrate the sun's rays in such a manner that would help a person to start a fire. Later in the day the bully had fallen asleep and Miss Cummings was called to the principal's office. I slipped out of my desk and down the aisle to where the bully slept. I used the magnifying glass to set the boy's shoes on fire. I was nearly back to my desk when Miss Cummings walked into the room. As she was giving me this look the bully awoke from his sleep and began to scream "My shoes are burning. Help me". Then I heard the words "Mickey Paul, what have you done?"

Years later I was at the end of 6th grade and now I was attending East Franklin School. I had a couple of good friends and we decided to have some fun with some of our teachers. Debbie Pierce, Rambo (later these 2 would marry) and I hatched a plan. Debbie would distract the teacher while Rambo and I would

See *Cummings*, page 5A

The Balancing Act

Norma, my swim laps buddy at Meeks Pool, was telling me she was getting ready to invest in another electronic gadget in order to keep connected with her grandsons. These two young boys claim that Skypeing is too "old timey". They want to talk to her from their tree house, not tethered to the house computer just to keep their Nana apprised of all the excitement in their lives. Once again, I found myself pondering how the world is changing. A remote communications system in a tree house?

Sure, some things do change faster than a speeding bullet. Other experiences for kids can't be modified too much. Last Sunday, while enjoying a sun bathed swim at Meeks Park pool with friends, we all had the pleasure of watching a Mom teaching her young son how to ride a two wheeler. She ran behind him, holding the back of the seat, just like my Dad did for me a half century ago. Over and over they rehearsed; each time she let loose of her grip a little more. Before you knew it, he was balancing like a champ. We all applauded, not just for their success, but for the memories that washed over us of our childhoods and of teaching our own youngsters to find their balance in life.

At the Farmers Market this Saturday, we want to celebrate the kids. And we are doing it the "old timey" way. There will be street chalk to draw on the pavement, balloons, snow cones, corn hole and sack races and a joke contest. Young cloggers will be entertaining around 11am. Bring your kids, your grandkids and the neighbors kids to the Farmers Market Saturday, August 18. They'll have so much fun; they'll get on their iPads as soon as they get home, to share it all with their friends.

Another announcement from a couple of my pool buddies took me by surprise. They said they decided they liked Tuesday nights at the Farmer Market better than Saturdays. When I inquired why, they said that it was less crowded and all the produce they could want is there that night. What they didn't know was that Tuesdays, the Market is now offering something else Saturday's isn't offering. Our educational seminars are in full swing. Between 4pm and 6pm there are seminars being offered for free from local and statewide experts. Here's the August schedule: August 21--Management of Sport Fishing Ponds, Management of Ornamental Ponds, Steven Patrick, County Extension Coordinator-Habersham County August 28--Native Plant Identification, Mickey P. Cummings, County Extension Coordina-

See *Leone*, page 5A



Joe Garner
BUCC
Blairsville - Union County Chamber of Commerce



JoAnne Leone
Farmers Market Moment

Letters

To the Editor

TSPLOST tax defeated

Dear Editor,
The voters have spoken and the TSPLOST tax was defeated by a vote count of 63 percent against on a Statewide level.

I have written many Letters to the Editors of newspapers before the TSPLOST tax vote was held. A lot of Newspapers published those letters and I thank you for doing so as a public service to your communities.

I am now asking all voters to consider asking the Governor to implement a moratorium on the three Regions in the State, which passed this tax, from collecting any TSPLOST tax monies until the legislature meets next year. I am also asking all voters to contact the Governor, their elected State Representatives and State Senators and ask them to make it a priority next year to revisit the TSPLOST law, to nullify it and come up with another way to get transportation funds if needed. The Law should be changed and nullified. If the Legislature and Governor are intent on having this vote again, it should be a State-

See *Sims*, page 5A

There's a better way

Dear Editor,
I am so glad to know my child's school days are over and done with, but I do have grandchildren now who attend the schools there in Blairsville. So therefore I do now have to worry about them.

I had no worry at all when my daughter was in school, but of course she attended another nearby school when times were simpler, and easier going and children went to school and got no breaks, other than their summer break which was a full three months.

All children also loved to attend the Georgia Mountain Fair too when it use to be in August. Any way, the schools now just absolutely start way too early, compared to the days of old.

Now, on to the present. My number one issue is the entrance to the pick up and drop off area of the Primary School on the old Shoe Factory Road. I noticed a back up line like no other and all vehicles were barely parked along the shoulder/grassy area of the road. I looked over at my daughter, shaking my head and told her just wait until there is a fender bender and all heck breaks loose between the parties for them to decide to build a special lane to turn off on to for this purpose and area.

I am so glad the Shoe Factory is closed down and not in business any more or there would be a major knock down and drag out. So will they start on this during the school term this year? I hope not!

And with just two months of summer now, I doubt they would even get the job done by next semester!

My next issue concerns just dropping

See *Barnes*, page 5A

What has happened to the USA?

Dear Editor,
"I pledge allegiance to the ..." What has happened to the pride of the Great Red, White, Blue? What has happened to the pride in our freedom to speak up against the unjust and evil doings of our national leaders and our fellow citizens? What has happened to our personal pride, as individuals; not to need support in the form of Hand Outs, but are willingly there to help their neighbor in need? What has happened to the Family? What has happened to our freedom to say those words anywhere we want to say them without our government telling us we cannot say those words? What has happened to the America I knew as a child? The United States of America, is like the torn and tattered flags I have seen around this coun-

See *Rashid*, page 5A

Let someone else decide

Dear Editor,
The July 31 general primary determined a number of important issues, and yet only a comparative handful of registered voters cast a ballot. Among the local issues was who the Republican candidate for the new 9th district congressional seat would be. Since neither of the three candidates received the required 50 percent plus one that would have secured their nomination, there will now be a runoff to decide who the candidate for the November election will be. The runoff will cost the people of the 9th money and time, but the sad part is that a very small number of voters will decide who the nominee will be. Several other issues were decided on the 31st. Among the most prominent was T-SPLOST, an issue that was overwhelmingly voted down. In addition, although many may not be aware, the nonpartisan races, including Probate Judge, were decided by the vote on the 31st. In addition to the polls being open for 12 hours on the day of the primary, there was early voting for three weeks, as well as all day on one Saturday prior to the primary, but only a fraction of Union County voters took advantage of the opportunity to vote. Since I hear people on both ends of the political spectrum complaining about the government, why are so many content to let someone else decide for them?

Robert K. Honea

End to conspiracy theories

Dear Editor,
Some people say Governor Romney's refusal to release years of tax returns indicates he has something to hide. Others say President Obama's refusal to release birth certificate or college records indicates that he has something to hide. Conspiracy theories abound. Why don't both release their records and put the rumors to rest?

Carol McKechnie

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