

Welcome Home Nick

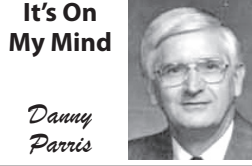
If you're an Atlanta Braves fan, you'll hear a lot of debate in the national and Atlanta news media about the most recent free agent signing by the Braves. Some of it will be negative, some will be spot on positive. For those in the North Georgia Mountains, you have to have a smile on your face as the news of Nick Markakis becoming a Brave is finally official. Nick is a Young Harris College Mountain Lion, coached by the legend Rick Robinson. He was probably more noted for his pitching prowess than being a contact-hitting outfielder. He was the seventh pick in the 2003 Major League Amateur Draft by the Baltimore Orioles. Coach Robinson said that when the Orioles called him about one of his players, he was surprised that they were talking about an outfielder. Nick was 13-0 with a microscopic earned run average. Coach Robinson asked them if they were sure that they weren't asking about a pitcher. They replied "the Markakis kid, the outfielder." In addition to being a lights out pitching prospect with a high-90s fastball, Nick also was an excellent hitter. It was the hitter that the Orioles were most interested in. Oriole Nation was skeptic about their No. 1 draft choice. After all, where the heck was Young Harris College? Well, it wouldn't be long before Nick Markakis put Young Harris College baseball on the map. Nick was lights out as a hitter in the minor leagues and it wasn't long before he was named the Orioles' top prospect by Baseball America. In his first start as an Oriole, Nick drew three walks in as many at bats. On his fourth at bat, Nick hit a 400-foot home run for his first Major League hit. For the naysayers, one need only look at Nick's statistics and tell that he is a ballplayer. He has 1,547 hits in his Major League career. He's a lifetime .290 hitter, and he's won two Gold Gloves as a rightfielder. There's plenty of talk about the departed Jason Heyward, but, give Nick some time and they'll hush up pretty quick. Only Robinson Cano and Ichiro Suzuki have more hits than Nick since 2007. We wish Nick a happy return to Georgia, and we wish him the best of luck as the new rightfielder in Atlanta. Now if we could only get Charlie Blackmon (also a Mountain Lion) from Colorado.



Straight Shooting Charles Duncan

A big Merry Christmas

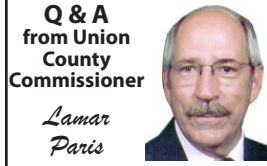
We live in a big world that keeps getting smaller in many ways, but a lot of things keep getting bigger and bigger. The word "big" is an interesting word. It is used, abused and overused. We talk about Big Brother, big business, big buildings, big cars, big churches, big cities, big government, big games, big houses, the big picture, the big upset, the big storm, big cheese, big shot, big gun, big wheel, big frog, big deal, big league, big mouth, big bucks, big salaries, etc. A man is impressed with bigness. He is a builder of bigness. I am sure that all of us have seen or read about the world's biggest cruise ship. The Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas was unveiled Nov. 20, 2009 in Fort Lauderdale. It cost \$1.4 billion dollars to build and can carry 6,296 passengers with a crew of 2,165. It is almost 4 football fields in length (1187 feet) and taller than the Statue of Liberty. According to an article I read this vessel contains seven themed neighborhoods. In the middle of the ship is Central Park, which is longer than a football field. It has thousands of plants, dozens of trees and outdoor cafes. The Boardwalk contains eateries, games and an "Aqua Theater" for live water shows. It also houses an in-door mall with dozens of shops. It includes several clubs, a 1,380-seat theater, a casino with 450 slot machines and 27 gaming tables. If passengers got bored they can go to the basketball court or volleyball court for entertainment. The Kid Zone contains everything from a science lab to a disco dance area. Would you believe it has a nursery for babies as young as six months old? I wonder if Noah would be impressed? Well, from Genesis in the building of the Tower of Babel to the building of Dubai, man's bigness pales in the awesome bigness of God. In this month of December we celebrate the biggest event in human history. When I think of the birth of the Son of God in a little town called Bethlehem, I feel like the country boy who saw the Grand Canyon for the first time; he gulped out the words, "Something b-i-g happened here!" Bethlehem was the place of the biggest birth in all of history. It was here that the great God of all creation became a little baby. According to



It's On My Mind Danny Parris

Questions and Answers

This week our Q & A is focusing on the Clerk of Superior Court which is an elected office (Judy Odum). We are providing general information and as with all the series that we have done on elected officials you should contact their office directly for more detailed and specific information (706) 439-6022. Q. What are the duties of the Clerk of Superior Court of Union County? A. This office is responsible for all the civil and criminal affairs and filings made in the Union County Superior Court. It also serves as the official recorder of real estate documents for the County, maintaining records of deeds, plats, etc. The Clerk also provides the jury pool for Grand Jury and civil and criminal trials. Q. What is needed to have deeds and plats recorded? A. Deeds need to have a witness and be notarized to be recorded. Plats must have a survey with signature (in black ink) by a certified engineer on the seal. A digital image must also be provided. Subdivision plats need to be approved by the County Building and Development Office prior to recording. Q. Does the Clerk of Court's office handle passports? A. Yes, they do. You should bring with you the following to apply for a passport: (Do not sign the passport application before hand. The application should be signed in the Passport Agent's office!); Bring one 2x2 official passport photograph (made within the last six (6) months); Certified copy of birth certificate with raised or embossed seal (from Vital Records Dept.) Or Naturalization Papers (proof of U.S. Citizenship); Georgia Driver's License with picture Or Valid Picture Identification Card Q. What else does the Clerk of Court's office do that the public typically does not know about? A. The Clerk of Courts office provides to veterans the recordation and permanent preservation of military discharge records. Military discharge records include: Copy 4, DD Form 214 issued by the United States government; Any copy of DD Form 214 with a raised seal issued by the United States National Personnel Records Center; or United States National Archives form 13038. A veteran desiring to have his or her military discharge re-



Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris

Letters to the Editor ...

Avis is a treasure

Dear Editor, Thank you for the wonderful article in the North Georgia News this week recognizing Ms. Avis Shaw. What a well-written story that is truly touching and inspirational - we enjoyed it so much! Thanks again - our deepest appreciation. Doug Davenport

The Birth of one, tiny Baby, celebrated differently

Dear Editor, In Greece, most houses will have a shallow, wooden bowl with a piece of wire suspended across the rim. A sprig of Basil, wrapped around a wooden Cross, hangs from the wire. Some water is kept in the bowl to keep the Basil alive and fresh. Once a day, someone, usually the mother, dips the Cross and Basil into some Holy Water and uses it to sprinkle the Water into each room of the house. Bethlehem is the site of the Church of the Nativity, which is ablaze with flags and decorations on every Christmas. On Christmas Eve, natives and visitors alike crowd the church's doorways and stand on the roof to watch for the dramatic annual procession. Galloping horsemen and police mounted on Arabian horses lead the parade. They are followed by solitary horseman carrying a cross and sitting astride a coal-black steed, then comes the churchmen and government officials. The procession solemnly enters the doors and places an ancient effigy of the Holy Child in the Church. Deep, winding stairs lead to a grotto where visitors find a silver star marking the site of the birth of Jesus. In Southern France, a log is burned in people's homes from Christmas Eve until New Years Day. A long time ago, part of the log was used to make the wedge for the plough as good luck for the coming harvest. In Switzerland, the Chlausjagen Festival or Feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated at dusk on 6 December with a procession of lifelarger wearing gigantic illuminated lanterns in the shape of a Bishop's mitre on their heads. The Swiss wait for the Christ child - called Christkindli --to arrive with gifts for all in his reindeer-drawn sleigh. Because of the warm weather in December, in Australia, Christmas shopping is often done in shorts and T-shirts. At many beaches, Santa Claus arrives on a surfboard, or even on a surf lifesaving boat. In Britain, children write their letters to Father Christmas and then throw them into the fireplace so they will float up the chimney and fly to the North Pole. If the lists catch fire first, they have to rewrite them.

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Support our teachers

Dear Editor, I am writing this letter in support of Union County teachers and support personnel. While I was happy to see that the Board of Education saw to it that the Superintendent and new Associate Superintendent were given raises, I think it is time to reward all the employees of the system. Many of the teachers and support personnel have not only gone at least three years or longer without a raise than the superintendent, many have also endured a decrease in pay due to furlough days for most of that period. I know the state has cut funding to the county. I also know that the Superintendent and the Board have worked hard to provide a quality education for our students. I know nobody likes to hear the words tax increase. I feel for the people on fixed incomes. However, I believe that teachers have been on a fixed income

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"Don't worry. This stuff burns a lot cleaner than coal."

Georgia's Christmas Tree Industry

The Georgia Christmas Tree Association is a farmer organization of Christmas tree growers, organized in 1961. The members invite the public to choose and harvest Christmas trees, direct from the farm. These farms offer a variety of quality Christmas trees, tree stands and attractions, and some farms have gift shops offering unique or hand-made items. All of the farms offer a farm experience adults and children will enjoy. A number of years ago, Georgia Christmas tree growers thought they had found the perfect Christmas tree with the Leyland cypress. It has qualities like no other tree; lush, green foliage, needles that remain on the tree, and longevity if properly watered. Seen by thousands of customers of Georgia Christmas tree farms, the beauty of this tree has propelled it to number one in sales on Christmas tree farms and in the nursery industry. The Leyland cypress is now planted all over Georgia's landscape. Available on many farms this year will be a new tree, which many growers think is a better tree than the original Leyland cypress. This tree is known as the Murray cypress. This tree was discovered by Bill Murray, a retired forester, while taking cuttings for his nursery. Murray, who was instrumental in the formation of the Georgia Christmas Tree Association and the Christmas Tree industry in Georgia more than 50 years ago, noted that this tree has desirable qualities beyond the original Leyland cypress in that it is a darker green and has stronger limbs for holding ornaments. For tree growers, it is almost unbelievable that the Murray cypress grows faster than the original Leyland cypress, which averages as much as four feet a year. It is more disease-resistant, will tolerate wetter soil and has a stronger root system. This looks like it is going to be the Christmas tree of the future, and as with all new trees, it has taken time to get the numbers of rooted cuttings to a level so the Murray cypress is widely available. As time goes on, this tree will be as readily available as the Leyland cypress is currently. Many Christmas tree farms throughout the state have already begun planting this new tree and not only will it make a good Christmas tree, but it is also expected to be as popular in the landscape industry as the Leyland cypress. Members of the GCTA continuously are looking for newer varieties on Georgia tree farms, as well as the ones that will make better Christmas trees. As always, there will be many different varieties of trees available on Georgia tree farms, as well as the ones mentioned so far. Among those available will be Virginia pine, Red cedar, Carolina sapphire, Blue ice, and others. Also in extreme north Georgia, a few farms are able to grow Fraser fir. Ninety percent of Georgia's Christmas tree pro-



Executive Director of RC&D Frank Riley

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Glenna Mae

She was born to Clifford and Effie Hyde on Oct. 18, 1916. She was headstrong and would fight anyone at the drop of a hat. She could out-work most men and she could be the kindest and most loving person you would ever meet. She didn't trust anyone in the government and her favorite sport was "wrestlin." One summer day after he and Glenna Mae had married the previous fall, two of Papa's old girlfriends showed up at the weaning off house. The girls were told that Coon and his wife Glenna Mae were in the field chopping cotton. They walked to the field and found Papa standing beside a wagon looking up at his young wife. The two girls spoke to Papa and introduced themselves to his wife. One of the girls asked Papa, "Coon, why did you marry this old gal when you could've had one of us?" Glenna leapt from the wagon and before Papa knew what was going on she had the girl on the ground pounding her head. Papa pulled her off the girl and the Lauderdale girls ran away. Sixty years later, Dad was preaching at Decoration Day. The two old Lauderdale girls were present and inquired about the status of my Papa. Dad told them Papa was alive and well as was his wife Glenna Mae. At the mention of her name the Lauderdale girls shivered. Dad invited them to the farm. One of the girls responded, "I don't think we need to do that do we sister?" One day a census worker came to Granny's house. At first Granny tried to answer the questions honestly. But, Glenna became suspicious when the census worker began asking questions about the number of quilts that were owned by the family. After one such question she went to her bedroom and pulled out the double barreled 20-gauge. The census worker quickly left the house. Granny never trusted anyone in the federal government. The day I was accepted to attend the University of Georgia was an exciting event for me. So, I called Granny to tell her the good news. I told her all about school and being able to attend the UGA football games. We even talked about Vince Dooley. I knew that Granny's sister had worked at Auburn when her son attended that school. Therefore, Granny knew a little about Auburn due to her sister's stories. As soon as we hung up the phone, Granny called her sister, Bess, to tell her about my news. Granny even mentioned Vince Dooley's name. Bess interrupted Granny and said, "I never did like that Vince Dooley. When I worked in the cafeteria at Auburn that Vince Dooley was the meanest boy at school and if he is coaching at Georgia then I don't like them." Granny responded, "If you say one more word about Vince Dooley and the Georgia Bulldogs I will beat the stuffing out of you." Granny didn't know Vince Dooley and



Around The Farm Mickey Cummings

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Debra Edwards Announces Retirement

Once upon a time, eight and a half years ago, there was a brand new Chamber President in Union County. Her name was Cindy. One of the first tasks that Ms. Cindy was given by her Board of Directors was to hire a full time Information Specialist who would run the county's Welcome Center. Being new to the job, Cindy was a little nervous about her first hire. She knew this person would often be the first face visitors would see when they came to Union County and to the Chamber, and she certainly wanted them to make a good impression. Ms. Cindy wanted this person to be warm, friendly, and kind. She wanted them to be fun and engaging. She wanted them to be passionate and knowledgeable. She wanted the perfect employee and the Lord saw fit to send her just that. That blessing came in the form of Debra Edwards... In 2006, Ms. Debra Edwards, whom I call Debbie, was hired as our Chamber's first and only, full time Information Specialist. She had previously worked with the Chamber in a membership and events capacity and came highly recommended. For eight years, I have worked alongside this amazing woman, and I cannot recall a single person who has ever had anything but nice things to say about her. As an employee, Debbie is steady, dependable, and trustworthy. As a person, she is delightful, charismatic, and



Blairsville - Union County Chamber Cindy Williams

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Cookies and Christmas

One of the great Christmas traditions in my home, growing up, was the making of the Christmas cookies. Some families earmarked a whole day for this once a year effort. Not the Leones. We spent a week baking dozens of cookies of at least ten varieties. First there were the "American" style cookies. Mom's butter recipe for the cutouts was one of my favorite to consume, but my least favorite to make. First, the dough was fragile, which of course was the reason they were so light and flaky. Rolling it out was never my forte. Then trying to decide from a dozen different cookie cutters, so you'd be sure to have a balanced distribution between holly leaves and bells was more math than I wanted to be responsible for, especially when it came down to packing up gifts for family and friends. God forbid there not be enough of Santa's boot to put at least one in each cookie box. The cut-outs were even more delicate after they were baked. They were frosted with a delicious butter frosting touched with a hint of both vanilla and almond extract. I was somewhat adept at the frosting coloring process. I had a good eye for how many drops made that perfect pale shade of green for the Christmas trees. The star shaped cut-outs seem to be the most fragile. With 5 points, you have to figure that between the process of using the cookie cutter, lifting it to the cookie pan before baking, removing it from the pan after baking, frosting it and then packaging it, the odds were against it still being a celestial showcase. The peanut butter cookie with the candy kiss was another American favorite. Rolling the dough balls in the sugar and then pressing that big Hershey kiss into the center was a task I took seriously, paying close attention that I didn't break the tip of the kiss. There were some cookies I didn't much care for. The butter cookies that were made in the press always seemed anemic to me. My Mom would use different color dough batches to enhance them, but they were too much trouble for what they were worth. I also so no need for making good old fashioned chocolate chip



Farmers Market Moment JoAnne Leone

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