

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Chance Encounters

Disney would say "It's a small world, after all." Kevin Bacon would call it "Six Degrees of Separation." The general public might just simply call it a coincidence of events. I call it nothing less than miraculous.

Chapter One: Art, receiving his draft notice in the early 1950s, enlisted in the United States Army, and after basic training went to Fort Lee, Virginia, for skills training in the Quartermaster Corps as a typewriter repairman, and then was stationed at Fort Drag, in Fayette-Nam, North Khaki-Lackey. (Civilians will know this as Fort Bragg.)

Chapter Two: Janice, after completing basic training in the last WAC rotation (Women's Army Corp) at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and after having completed a little over 3 years in the European theater, returned stateside to, you guessed it, Fort Bragg, and was billeted across the street from where Art, her father, had been billeted in the 1950s. What a joy when Art visited and the two of us drove through then a much different, yet reminiscently familiar post.

Chapter Three: Rob, knowing that the draft was on, and claiming to be "a lover, not a fighter," joined the Air Force for two years to avoid being dropped into the Army for four. Yet, that decision would land him in the only Air Force outfit to draw combat pay as he was stationed on the island of Ch'o-Do, North Korea. Yup, North Korea, behind enemy lines. Rotating back to the states after being in country until the armistice was signed in 1953 to, you guessed it, Fort Bragg. (All this, unbeknownst to Janice)

Chapter Four: Years after Janice left service to complete her degree in South Florida, she met Rob, and in time, married. It was not until a short time after we were married that Art came to visit us in South Florida. Of course, with the three of us all having served, it was easy for the conversation to turn to military service. And as it turns out Art, my father, and Rob, my husband 25 years my senior, served together in Fayetteville, one in the Army at Fort Bragg, and the other in the Air Force at Pope Air Force Base, just across the air strip.

Chapter Five: Janice excuses herself to the back porch to read while Art and Rob talk about all of the things they experienced together, separately.

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Military Musings

Janice Walters-Taylor



Peaceful Fruit

Deion Sanders is the only athlete who has played in a World Series and a Super Bowl. To what did that success lead him? Attempted suicide.

Sanders played in the 1992 World Series (Braves). He is a two-time Super Bowl champion (1994-49ers; 1995-Cowboys). Despite fame and fortune, in 1997 he drove his car off a 40-foot cliff. Intentionally. He writes in his biography, "I was going through the trials of life. I was empty, no peace, no joy." His soul warred with the fruitlessness of his life.

With Sanders, did God almost drop the ball? Is it his job to ensure you have a nice life while you try to be a moral and successful person? That sounds religious, but it isn't Christianity. The Christian worldview makes sense of life as you experience it, and trials are part of everyone's experience. But trials do not tell your whole story.

Good can come from suffering. By it we can experience God's comfort and grace. Theologian J. I. Packer explains that the purpose of troubles and perplexities of life "is to ensure that we shall learn to hold Him fast. When we are caught in rough country in the dark, with a storm getting up and our strength spent, and someone takes our arm to help us, we shall thankfully lean on him." When suffering finds you, walk it to the foot of the cross. There you'll meet the One who knows about suffering and gives you peace despite the human experience. That's the rest of the story.

"It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Suffering teaches you to accept God's rule in your life. Chuck Colson, who spent time in prison after Watergate, agrees. "God uses the thorns and thistles that have infested creation since the Fall to teach, chastise, sanctify, and transform us, making us ready for that new heaven and earth. The greatest blessings in my life have emerged from suffering. God's purposes are the context that give suffering meaning and significance."

Meaninglessness tortured Deion Sanders. But then he experienced this truth: "He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems not

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Who (which organization) is responsible for rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine to Union County?

A. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout for the state of Georgia is being managed by the Georgia Department of Public Health. Your local health department falls under the supervision of the Georgia Department of Public Health. The state of Georgia is divided into 18 districts. Union County falls under District 2 for the Department of Public Health and it is headquartered in Gainesville, GA. Other counties in this district include Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White.

Q. What is the current status of the COVID-19 vaccine availability in Union County?

A. The Department of Public Health (on their website) provides the public with a list of providers who have requested the vaccine. The report also tells us how many vaccines were requested and how many vaccines were sent to each provider. This information is very fluid and can change within a 24-hour period. As of this writing, the list shows a total of five providers that have requested the vaccine. Individuals can download the list and further analyze the exact provider/dose information at www.dph.ga.gov.

Q. What is the "Operation Warp Speed" term that I hear on TV?

A. Operation Warp Speed is a partnership among components of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Defense to help develop, make, and distribute millions of vaccine doses for COVID-19 nationwide as quickly as possible while ensuring that the vaccines are safe and that they work. Operation Warp Speed's goal is to produce and deliver 300 million doses of safe and effective vaccines, with the initial doses available by January 2021, as part of a broader strategy to accelerate the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.

Q. Who is paying for the COVID-19 vaccine?

A. Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccina-

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Worship Proclamation

Dear Editor,

We have heard of the Bill of Rights and Separation of State and Church. How about religious rights? The right of churches to worship freely without government intrusions or restrictions. The right to assemble in God's house without fear of retribution imposed by Clergy or others. All churches of faith need to be in solidarity to defend these rights. Be Strong and of Good Courage! Be not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is your reasonable duty.

Dan Laughridge
Blairsville Grace Force

You'll Shoot Your Eye Out

Dear Editor,

When I was young, I like so many other young boys wanted a rifle. Whether it be a BB, pellet or .22 didn't matter. I just wanted to have something for plinking. Something to fight off Black Bart and his band of marauders. A rifle I could call my own that I could learn how to clean and take care of. Something I could use to learn how to identify my target before placing my finger on the trigger. Something I could use to learn respect for other people and things. Something that would teach me firearm safety. As Sheriff of Dusty Gulch, it was my responsibility to make sure Miss Cindy would be safe when she strolled through town and old Mr. Ruger wouldn't have to worry about someone running off with his brand-new red wagon.

To do all this I needed a way to protect their families as well as mine, but first I needed to learn. I was very fortunate that my father understood all this and presented me with my very own .22-caliber pellet rifle when I was 7 years

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Model for Other Communities

Dear Editor,

A friend sent me an email about Covid immunizations for Union and Towns counties at the gym in union county. My wife and I fall within the first group eligible to be immunized. I got online and got two time slots for this morning. Within 10 minutes I got confirmation of the times and was also scheduled for the follow up shots in February.

The process this morning was very smooth.

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Re: Angry Americans

Dear Editor,

I am not an eloquent speaker; I am just a simple North Georgia farmer and also a very proud AMERICAN! As such, I am saddened by all of the negative things that are put out each day about MY President and tolerated among the people — never before has such insult and slander been condoned. I am, and always will be, proud of Donald J. Trump for being the common man's president. He has fought for American jobs and to protect our best interest. I am an American patriot and very thankful that that is the way I was raised.

It is sickening to me to be considered as "unpatriotic" because we back our president. For eight years, we all went along with Obama, and no one had riots or anything like that. He was the President of the United States, and everyone, whether they liked him or not, put up with him. From Day 1 of Trump's presidency, he was attacked and told he would be removed. That was only done because the Democrats knew he wouldn't be their puppet, but rather would fight for "us," the normal people.

In regards to the BLM protests, I believe they had the right to protest. They can thank people like my dad and the many others who have served and given the ultimate sacrifice in

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Letters to the Editor

"Men of Lee's Calibre"

Dear Editor,

An advertisement appeared in your Jan. 20 issue addressed "To All Students in Union County," and referred to Generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson as "TRAITORS to the United States, who killed U.S. Soldiers and fought for human enslavement." It also stated that Lee owned 200 slaves.

None of the Confederate leaders, including President Jefferson Davis, were put on trial for treason. The last thing the Federal government wanted was a public forum to debate the constitutionality of secession. Lee's wife inherited her father's slaves in 1857, and Lee, as executor of the estate, freed those slaves within five years, as stipulated by his father-in-law. Lee also supported the American Colonization Society, and assisted ex-slaves to emigrate to Liberia, a colony of former American slaves.

In 1860 the largest slave-owning country on the planet was the United States of America. In Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address in March 1861, he stated he would not interfere with slavery where it existed, and believed the U.S. Constitution protected slavery, an ages old institution that goes back thousands of years and not exclusive to the American South as many seem to believe today.

If the fledgling Confederacy fought a war to keep Blacks enslaved, how does that differ

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Troubled Waters

Dear Editor,

Need all of the prayer warriors and those who pray as well on the front lines, for we are in serious trouble with this new administration, and we need day and night to bombard heaven's doors of hope for those who are running this country.

Things are going to drastically change, not for the betterment of our nation, but for those in office in the White House and across our country who want to get rid of our freedoms and liberties and justice, so they tell us what to do and how to think their way, against our faith and beliefs, which they oppose greatly.

It's time, folks, to get down to the brass tacks of fervent praying, without ceasing. That doesn't mean 24 hours a day, but in constant thought of prayers being lifted up to our Lord of Hosts. The war is now real. The enemy has chosen their agenda, but our God has His own agenda, and this is where we are effective in our prayer life, because God tells us in His Word that He relishes and hears the prayers of His righ-

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Old Myths I Have Heard

When I was a little boy, I caught a toad and played with it all one morning while my grandparents were chopping weeds in the cotton field. My grandmother came over to the wagon and tractor where I was playing. When she seen me with the toad, she let out a groan. I was told to let go of that toad and wash my hands.

She soon had me convinced that in the next few days I would wake up with warts all over my hands. She told me we would have to go visit Uncle MC Howard so he could take the warts off of my hands. Uncle MC was known for being able to say some words and make warts disappear.

I worried about them warts all that night and into the morning. Once again, we went to the fields to work. I was told not to play with any toads. As I sat under the wagon with nothing to do, I noticed a toad nearby. My grandmother's words were still ringing in my ears as I looked at my hands. There were still no warts present. However, I figured since toads caused warts, I'd be better off without them. So, I squished it under my foot. By the time my grandparents rested for lunch I had killed four of those wart-causing toads. I thought they would be proud. But instead my grandmother was quite upset. She told me it was a sure thing the cow would go dry. She went on to explain that if a person killed a toad intentionally, the family's milk cow would dry up and produce no milk.

Another story I heard from my Granny was about thunder. One evening it was about to storm and began to thunder. We were sitting on the back porch, and upon hearing thunder, she exclaimed, "Sounds like the Lord is rolling his watermelons under his bed." That evening while I slept, it thundered most of the night, and I pictured in my mind that Jesus was rolling watermelons around in his bedroom. The next morning, I looked under the bed in the spare room and pulled out one of Papa's melons. I looked at it a moment and gently rolled it back under the bed. Sure enough it sounded like distant thunder.

A few days later we were out in the cotton patch when it began to rain. As it rained, the sun kept shining. Granny looked up after a minute to rest and told me, "The devil must be fighting with his wife." I must've had a puzzled look on my face, because she explained that anytime it was raining and the sun was shining at the same time, one could deduce that the devil was fighting with his wife.

Also that summer we found a yellow jacket nest built up in a tree instead of being in the ground. Granny told me it was sign that we'd

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Apple Tree Pruning

Deep winter is prime apple tree pruning time. Pruning apple trees is important early in the tree's life so that it gets started off right. Later on, if you properly prune the tree each year the tree will be more productive, more disease resistant, and have a longer life. Keeping all these things in mind, let's talk about apple tree pruning today.

The general advice that I give people when it comes to pruning apple trees is to prune as much as you feel comfortable, then go back and prune a bit more. Most of the time people are afraid of damaging the tree if they cut too far back. But, if trees are pruned at the right time of year and the right branches are cut off, it will be better for the long term health of the tree.

If you have a tree that has not been pruned regularly, and you're trying to get it back into shape you'll want to start out by pruning out and dead or diseased branches. Second you'll want to cut out any crossing branches. Crossing branches create open wounds that can get easily infected. After you've pruned out dead, diseased, and crossing branches you want to try and open up the canopy. An open canopy will allow air to flow through. That's going to reduce the humidity, and therefore reduce the severity of disease occurring. The saying is that you want the canopy to be so open that a bird could fly through it without hitting any branches. A tree that has too many branches will not be as productive. An apple tree is only able effectively produce a certain amount of fruit. Adding fertilizer can boost the productivity. Therefore, pruning might affect the number of fruit you tree produces, but you'll have better quality and they'll be more likely to make it all the way to maturity.

Trees that have been properly pruned their whole lives will have more a Christmas tree shape than a teardrop shape. If you have a newly planted tree you'll need to prune it as well. If you have planted an unbranched whip you'll need to cut it back to 24 to 30 inches above the ground. This is going to encourage the new tree to branch out. If you don't prune an unbranched whip, you'll probably end up having a 20-foot-tall tree that doesn't have any branches on it.

Sometimes people will plant a seed from an apple core that they've eaten. This can be a fun experiment for kids to see an apple tree grow. An issue that you may run into with this is that there is no telling what kind of apple tree will come up. If you plant a seed from your favorite apple, that fruit could have been pollinated by a different variety, leaving you with an unknown cross. Another issue is that nowadays most trees

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Chamber of Commerce

This year, we missed being able to have an in-person Chamber Awards Night, but this past week we filmed the awards presentations and hope to have the video edited and quickly released. We are excited to announce the Business of the Year and the Person of the Year as we feel this entity and individual went above and beyond to help our Community during the pandemic.

We were honored to be a part of the dedication ceremony for the Medical Lab at the High School that was dedicated to Mrs. Shaw. Hearing her speak about her years in public health made all realize that it is people like her who have helped form the foundation for our healthcare system. She told of having to administer all the shots over the years, and while there were mixed reactions, time proved that they were the best thing for everyone. Thanks to the school system for the foresight to train our next generation of medical professionals and for honoring those who make our

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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