

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Digital Radios

Communication is the key to success. Whether it be an organization, business or relationship, good communications are essential for any of them to function properly. Communications are especially important in the area of public safety where seconds count and lives may be on the line. Last week, all Union County public safety organizations switched from an analog radio format to a digital radio format to improve communications.

One of the major reasons for the change was the recent "narrowbanding." Radios work off frequencies that are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission. In the past, the FCC would allow us to use 25 kilohertz efficiency technology and we had good communications in most of the county. However, due to the need for more frequencies, the FCC started narrowing to at least the 12.5 kHz efficiency technology, which reduced our capabilities. The FCC is planning to possibly narrowband again to 6.25 kHz in the near future.

The old analog system transmits data in the form of a wave. The narrower the band, the less likely the radio transmission would work properly. The narrowbanding produced issues with range and clarity of communications on the analog, waveform, system. There were multiple places where we had limited to no communications via radio after the narrowbanding.

A digital system carries data in the binary form and works at a narrower frequency band width. These radio transmissions are in the form of "0s" and "1s" like a computer. When a person talks into a digital radio, the voice is converted to digital format; transmitted on a frequency; received at another radio; then the digital signal is converted into voice to be heard. The signal is clear, without static and has a greater range. We now have communications in places we previously didn't with the analog system.

Unfortunately, those of you who have an older, analog scanner will not be able to hear the new digital system. There are digital scanners available however the scanner must have the capability to receive NXDN technology.

The major goal of this change was to improve communications for Union County public safety. Although we have improved and upgraded the aged analog equipment over the years, changing

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Meaning

Why am I here? Does life have purpose? These are questions probed by philosophers, but they are also very personal, freighted with implications.

Someone with no good answer is more likely to succumb to the modern suicide epidemic. PSYCHOLOGY TODAY reports that the suicide rate now exceeds highway fatalities, and is higher than it has been since 1950. A pointless life is unbearable and lonely.

Author Thomas Wolfe concluded that loneliness is inevitable. In "God's Lonely Man," he expressed a certain meaninglessness. "All this hideous doubt, despair, and dark confusion of the soul a lonely person must know, for he is united to no image save that which he creates himself. He has no faith in him except his own and often that faith deserts him leaving him shaken and filled with impotence. Then it seems to him that his life has come to nothing."

Contributing to the problem is scientism, the belief that science can answer all questions. Zoology professor and Nobel Prize winner Peter Medawar warned young scientists about that. "I have in mind such questions as: 'How did everything begin?' 'What are we all here for?' 'What is the point of living?'" These questions become incoherent if you accept evolution as settled science. Why should you, a collection of molecules arranged by a meaningless, random process, expect to find transcendent meaning?

The Bible has answers that are coherent and reasonable. Its explanations correspond to what we observe and deduce. Scientists regularly observe evidence of design quite beyond the reach of Darwinism. We deduce that since nothing material causes itself, logic demands a First Cause, a Creator. So, to what end would God create your soul to reside in an earthly body? Abraham left hearth and home for unknown places because "he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). Paul counted "all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). These men

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. I have read several articles and heard you speak about Union County having some of the lowest property taxes in Georgia. Is this still true?

A. Yes, this is still true. As your commissioner this is a very important issue for me and that of my employees. Our goal is to always provide you with the best services and the best facilities while being fiscally responsible and keeping the cost of government as low as possible. We always evaluate all of our expenses and how they might impact our property taxes. Obviously Splost really helps in our goal to keep property taxes as low as possible.

Q. When you tell us that we have one of the lowest property tax rates in the State of Georgia, what does that really mean?

A. There are 159 counties in Georgia and they all have property taxes, based on a "mill" rate. After checking all of the information we collect from the state, Union County government has the third lowest mill rate of any other county in the entire State of Georgia. Union County School system also has the third lowest mill rate in the state of Georgia and combined (county and school), we have the third lowest in the state. This is something we can all be proud of and means your county and school are maintaining a quality school systems and county government and at the same time, doing it with some of the lowest taxes, which is not easy to do.

Q. How does the property tax rate convert into property taxes paid?

A. It is fairly complicated, and there are many variables. Your property taxes here and in any county in the state are based on their assessed value (40% of market value). Therefore, if you have property in a county with low proper values, such as in South Georgia, then of course your taxes per acre will be lower than in a county in the north part of the state or near a large metro area where property values are higher. However, since the vast majority of people who pay property taxes do it on their home, there is not such a large difference in values for homes unless your home is on a lakefront property or some other commercial or high value property.

(Property Taxes Continued next week, part two)

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Stigma and Shame

This is a reprint of an article that was published in March 2019. Stigma and shame continue to be a roadblock for families and individuals that would benefit

from prevention or treatment programs.

This is a reminder that there is no shame in reaching out for help. Substance use or abuse

can be treated and those who receive the proper intervention at the onset of use, are more likely to engage in prevention or recovery lifestyles. Ignoring or denying the problem is not beneficial to families or individuals who are abusing or dependent on substances.

As a community we can eliminate the stigma surrounding addiction, but we first must change the way we believe and respond to those struggling with substance abuse disorders. Consider your own personal beliefs about "drug addicts". When you think of an addict, what is

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The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

Letters to the Editor

Response to "Demofascists on the Loose"

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to a letter titled "Demofascists on the Loose" that appeared in the Aug. 7 edition of the North Georgia News. Firstly, I want to state that I am a conservative, and I am a firm supporter of the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. I am making no judgment or commenting on the author's personal views. However, as someone who has a degree in history and is an active duty military officer, I feel it is imperative to point out some glaring historical inaccuracies in that Aug. 7 letter.

Firstly, the writer states: "Any American colonist who was apprehended in possession of such a firearm (Kentucky long rifle) was subject to immediate arrest and summary execution." There are no accounts of any colonists in North America ever being systematically summarily executed for possessing a Pennsylvania/Kentucky rifle. These weapons were commonplace in North America, and it would have been impossible for British forces to execute every person who owned one. These weapons were possessed not only by Patriots in favor of the Revolution but also by Loyalists who were against the Patriot cause, plus the roughly one-third of colonists who had no interest in the conflict one way or the other and simply wanted to be left alone.

Additionally, there is no evidence of any orders, policy, or directives by British commanders or officials stating that colonists in possession of these weapons could be summarily executed. There were atrocities committed by both sides during the conflict, with examples including the Loyalist massacre of surrendered Patriot militia at the Battle of the Waxhaws and the Patriot massacre of surrendered Loyalist militia at the Battle of King's Mountain. But these atrocities were not based on any official policy of either side and were certainly not based on an official British policy relating to the possession of a certain type of firearm.

Secondly, the Aug. 7 letter writer's implication that British forces on April 19, 1775, were dispatched to Concord to confiscate personal weapons is untrue. The goal of the British on that momentous day was to move to Concord to confiscate or destroy "military stores" held by the independent Patriot militia that were rumored to be in Concord. Most of these items had been removed and hidden by the militia, although three artillery pieces were indeed found to be buried in the area and were disabled by the British, along with the destruction of a large amount of flour, gunpowder and 500 pounds of musket balls. However, no British troops intended to confiscate personal weapons from the colonists.

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Environmental Conference

This week, Kim and I are participating in the 14th Annual Georgia Environmental Conference (GEC) on Jekyll Island.

We have our RC&D Wildfire and Soil Health show that we take to any event that concerns the environment to promote our Firewise and NRCS small landowner oriented agricultural programs. We also had a booth for our 13-foot Smokey, who is our mascot and goes everywhere with us. Last year, we were recognized at the conference as the best exhibit because Smokey could be seen from all over the building and drew people for a picture with the "Only You can Prevent Wildfire" icon. Everybody has a childhood memory about Smokey and wants a picture with the symbol of wildfire prevention who recently turned 75.

Our successful wildfire education project was born in Towns County in 2008 and has now spread up the Appalachians through western North Carolina into Virginia using six RC&Ds to duplicate our Towns County model. Our mission with this project is to spread wildfire education to citizens at risk from wildfire in Georgia and all the Appalachian region.

Plans are to expand our project into South Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky in 2020 when funding becomes available. Our NRCS Small Farmer program was recently renewed for another year and helps small farmers learn about government programs that are available to help them develop their farm business and become more efficient from the beginning, and to have a better chance to be successful.

With this grant we also have small equipment to loan to a beginning farmer so they can get started without having to go into debt to purchase the necessary tools and equipment. This can jump start their farm business and give them a chance to make it be successful or decide it is not for them. Conferences like the GEC showcase our projects and gain support for our work from the environmental community.

The Annual Georgia Environmental Conference is the largest, most comprehensive and diverse educational opportunity and is attended by over 700 Local, State, and Federal Government Officials, Business and Industry Leaders, local environmental officials, consultants, and many others with a strong interest in environmental activities in Georgia and the Southeast region.

Over the three-day event, GEC will host an elite group of environmental professionals seeking to exchange knowledge and share ideas around environmental concerns in Georgia and

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Alfred

Recently, I heard a story about my great-grandfather, Alfred West, concerning a chestnut bur. He stated there was an older boy named Alton that moved into his community. Now, this boy thought he knew more than everyone else. Anything you could do, he could do better. If you were plowing, he would tell you that you were plowing wrong. Or if you were fishing a certain way, he would tell you another way of fishing. So, one day, the two young men were plowing a field of corn. As usual, the boy began telling the younger West boy how he was plowing wrong. So, during a water break, Alfred found a chestnut bur and slipped it under the collar of the mule Alton was using to plow. A collar was used by farmers to hook mules and horses to plows and wagons, so naturally, it would be bothersome to the animal.

After the water break, Alton pulled on the reigns of the mule to turn him back into the field. Immediately, the mule began bucking and kicking. Alton let go for a minute and tried again. The mule began to buck and kick again. This went on for 20 minutes until Alfred went to the front of the mule and secretly pulled out the chestnut bur while whispering something into the mule's ear. At first, Alton thought his friend was strange because of his whispering to the mule. But, every time he pulled on the reins of the mule, it responded and worked just fine. For years, Alton thought his friend Alfred was the one man that knew more about mules than anyone else. He went around telling everyone that Alfred had a special way with mules and horses.

This reputation with horses and mules soon spread to other types of livestock, and my great-grandfather soon found himself practicing medicine on animals. He never earned a degree from any college, but he used a lot of horse sense when dealing with sick animals. One day around the turn of the century, a man showed up at the West house asking for Alfred. Understand that West was maybe 5 feet 7 inches tall and topped the scale at possibly 100 pounds. So, as he walked around the corner of the house, the man sized him up and stated, "You are not what I pictured in my mind. After listening to Alton, I figured you must be 7 feet tall and weighing around 300 pounds. Anyway, he says you're good with critters and I have a sick Jersey Bull."

Alfred hooked up his buggy, and along with his 17-year-old daughter Laura, rode off the Newburgh Mountain to the man's farm in a little community called Mt. Hope. They found the man at the barn with the bull in a stable. This fellow

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Fescue Endophyte

In this article, I'm going to be talking about fescue and its use in pastures. Fescue is a very commonly grown pasture grass around here. It is a cool season grass, which means that it does best in the spring and fall. Hot, dry summers are difficult for fescue and will stress it out. Fescue can be an excellent source of forage for livestock. Unfortunately, fescue also has a dark side to it that creates problems for livestock that graze it. I'd like to talk about what causes those problems, and things that you can do to mitigate them in the pasture.

An endophyte can grow in fescue. An endophyte is a fungus that lives inside a plant. If livestock consume too much of the endophyte they'll get what's called fescue toxicosis. Symptoms of livestock that have fescue toxicosis are reduced conception rates, decreased weight gain, decreased milk production, constricted blood flow to extremities, elevated body temperature, heat intolerance, excessive nervousness, and failure to shed winter coats in the spring. Generally, fescue toxicosis doesn't kill livestock directly, but it will weaken them and leave them in an unhealthy state. In horses, the worst effects of fescue toxicosis are in pregnant mares, because they are very sensitive to it and it can cause late term abortions, or thickened placentas. Even very low levels of endophyte can cause fescue toxicosis in equine.

The endophyte does not spread by infecting nearby uninfected fescue plants. It spreads because the endophyte actually benefits the plant by making it more drought tolerant and more persistent under grazing. Therefore, if you have planted fescue that is endophyte free, after a few years you can expect your pasture to be full of endophyte-infected plants, because the endophyte makes the fescue more resilient. Because of this, I would say that it's safe to assume a pasture is endophyte infected, unless you know that you have planted either endophyte free or novel type endophyte recently.

Novel endophyte means that the fescue still has an endophyte in it, but with the bad parts of it taken out. Fescue with novel type endophyte in it that UGA Extension recommends are MaxQ and Texoma MaxQ II. The novel endophyte will have the increased drought tolerance and grazing tolerance, but not make livestock sick.

Another option that many producers use is mixing fescue stands with orchardgrass. Orchardgrass is a very good quality forage that is also a cool season grass. Mixing stands means that livestock will consume less of the endo-

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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