

Opinions

Everybody has one...

UCFD Training Facility

In the October 6th volume of the North Georgia News, you may have read about the live fire training. The firefighters that took part in this training were from Fannin County and Towns County Fire Departments' recruit classes. Instructors from Fannin, Towns, and Union conducted the training. We were honored to host this training and we are proud of all of the participants.

Live fire training is essential for firefighters. It is an opportunity for firefighters to experience a fire in a controlled setting. Firefighters can learn in the classroom about fire conditions, the low visibility, and heat in a structure fire but training with live fire conditions allows them to experience it firsthand. This type of training is only possible if you have the facilities that are designed and constructed for this type of training. We are fortunate to have the Union County Fire Department Training Facility.

The Union County Fire Department Training Facility was a major objective of our strategic plan and was completely paid for with SPLOST funds. Phase I began with the grading of the land and preparing the "pad" for the storage containers. Phase II involved assembling the storage containers into a building and completing the renovations that were needed to turn them into a training facility. Most of the construction and renovations were done by members of the Union County Fire Department.

The Main purpose of Phase II was to construct a facility that will meet the requirements for live fire training; NFPA 1403; and Insurance Services Office (ISO). That requires a three-story building, a smoke room, and a live fire room. There are two live fire rooms, one on the first level and one on the second level. The training facility consists of its own water supply and hydrants. Blairsville City Water helped to provide the water lines and Notla Water donated the hydrants.

The training facility also has props and training equipment for other fire fighting and rescue training. We are able to train on search and rescue, ladders, ropes, survival, forcible entry, pump operations, and much more. Having this facility enables firefighters with realistic training.

Union County Fire Department is proud to have the training

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Waves and Winds

On the anniversary of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsberg's death, the ACLU tweeted a quote by her. The judge's 1993 statement was "dated," so the tweeter rewrote the engendered words and pronouns. A New York Times columnist complained, "It was somewhat Orwellian to rewrite historical narratives to suit modern sensibilities." One would think Ginsberg, the ACLU, and the NYT would be of the same mind. But times change, so do minds.

Much is Orwellian these days due to chronological snobbery, i.e. today's ideas are better than yesterday's. Christianity has not been immune to such "reinterpretation" as though eternal truths change with the times. But we are not "children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings" (Heb. 13:8-9).

We resist the waves and winds with a personal knowledge of God as Creator and Ruler of all. Creation is not the Creator. God transcends creation yet guides history toward the culmination of time. His power and perfection create a vast gulf between Him and His creatures.

Modern sensibilities hold that humans are basically good and simply need to tap our "better angels." The solutions are self-help techniques and cafeteria spirituality. This rewrite denies that we are marked by the dreadful stain of sin, separated from a holy God. Yet we cannot hold any moral course on our own, which proves our brokenness. All have sinned, and we know it.

The waves and winds would make Jesus into a simple teacher of righteousness whose death was an admirable example of self-sacrifice. His Resurrection would be spiritual, certainly not miraculous. Yet the actual Jesus regarded Himself as God the Son, the object of your faith, the Savior of your soul. If this is not true, He was a false teacher. If true, His death and physical Resurrection change everything. Only Jesus, God the Son, bridges the vast gulf between you and the Father. This is not an exclusive claim because it is for anyone who believes.

We need absolute Truth. Professor Carl Trueman writes, "A gospel rooted in Scripture and based on the historical action

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Q. What does TSPLOST stand for and what can it do in Union County?

A. TSPLOST stands for Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, and it is a one penny sales tax that voters have the opportunity to vote on November 2nd. The one penny would generate approximately \$5 to \$7 million each year in Union County for the five-year collection period. The money generated will be used for any transportation upgrades and maintenance in the county, along with related expenses, vehicles and equipment.

Q. Why does Union County need another penny sales tax?

A. Roads and bridges and all related safety equipment are the backbone of Union County government infrastructure. It is something the public does not often notice and that is the way we like it. If you are constantly complaining about our road system, then we are doing something wrong. However, with the current funding, and the amount of road maintenance involved, we can no longer pay for all our road work without additional revenue.

Q. What are our local options to pay for the Roads and Bridges going forward?

A. There are two sources of revenue to pay for them going forward. Either we can use property tax to increase funding or we can use sales tax.

Q. Explain the difference in the use of Property Taxes or Sales Taxes to pay for Roads and Bridges.

A. It is pretty simple. We all know how property taxes work. Each property owner in the county pays a percent of the value of their property (millage rate) to the county for our maintenance and operations budget including Roads and Bridges. People who live here but do not own property, or who visit here, shop, and enjoy the mountains with all we have to offer, utilize the county infrastructure and services but contribute only a fraction of offsetting revenue.

However, if an additional one penny sales tax is voted on, then everyone contributes to our Roads and Bridges. It is estimated that others paying the sales tax contribute anywhere from 30% to 40% of the funding, thus saving the property owners from hav-

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Veteran Camaraderie

Hey there, readership. Last week my husband was admitted to the hospital for surgery. The surgery was successful, and he's in a room now recovering nicely.

But what does this have to do with military musings? There's a nurse technician here at the hospital that was in the Air Force. And of course, the nurse is much younger than my husband of 90 years. But the camaraderie that the two established, even though they are nurse and patient, transcended that relationship, and they were able to speak on another level.

I find that so often. My husband probably wears a baseball cap with Korea Veteran written across the front, adorned with all of his glory pins. It's a great conversation starter and icebreaker. He's often thanked for his service. I have heard, just having worn that hat. It seems that the common ground of being a veteran, regardless of branch of service, but even more so

See Walters-Taylor, page 5A

Military Musings

Janice Walters-Taylor



Letters to the Editor

Hamilton Gardens

Dear Editor,
Many former volunteers, locals, area visitors, and tourists will soon be aware of the change in operations at Hamilton Gardens.

For those of us who are in one or more of these categories, we want to thank the dedicated, unselfish staff and volunteers who have woven their hearts, knowledge, experience, and time into the fabric of Mother Earth.

The blooming season of May and June explodes in glorious colors among the rhododendrons and azaleas. Sprinkled among them are native plants such as trillium, Solomon's seal, lady slipper, mayapple and more.

Not to be outdone, a treasure of hardwood trees stands guard over the gardens protecting nature's family and watching over the gentle, magnificent, southern Appalachian mountain range.

For so many of us, the gardens touch us as a memorial to the ones we have lost. The angels who maintain these few acres of precious ground with its feel of quiet calmness and one with Creation, are past and present.

Grace Howard, Maggie Oliver, Marsha Elliott (in loving memory), Carol Townsend, Linda Jones and all that we are not personally aware of.

You have all made Hamilton Gardens a gift back to Mother Nature. We believe the Native American Indians are proud of you!

With respect,
Beverly Mosely, Alice Bergman, Elaine Bliss, Sylvia Purcupile, Donna Cates, Leslie Wade

Thank You Spry Family Cleaners

To Whom It May Concern:
We are finally going to give a huge thank you to a local business that went above and beyond for our family last year two days before our daughter's wedding.

Unexpected and often crazy things happen during wedding weeks, and we were no exception, but things were going fairly smoothly until Thursday, Nov. 12... a day I will never forget.

Our daughter and son-in-law's wedding was scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 14. Without going into a lot of detail, our daughter picked up her wedding gown on the previous Saturday from an out-of-town cleaners, and as she was trying it on 48 hours before her wedding, we noticed huge black marks all over the dress. It was unwearable. We were devastated and panic-stricken. Her beautiful "dream dress" was ruined it seemed.

I did not know what to do. Our hearts were broken. I called Chris Spry at Spry Family Cleaners. He was able to clean the dress and it was perfect. I called Chris Spry at Spry Family Cleaners. He was able to clean the dress and it was perfect.

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Letters to the Editor

Follow-up to My Sept. 8 Letter

Dear Editor,
Well, by now, I'm sure you've opened your 2021 property tax bill. Did you get the Gomer Pyle "SURPRISE, SURPRISE" that I predicted in my Sept. 8 letter in these pages? Mine went up 40%. Thank you Lamar and School Board.

Steve Bernthal
Union County Resident since 1993

Dump

Dear Editor,
Let's go back to January 2008 when the Commissioner was trying to promote a Referendum vote for SPLOST 3.

In the North Georgia News (NGN) it said, "SPLOST funds would be used for the transfer station, a situation he inherited."

"Anyone who has been there lately knows it rightly deserves the name, dump," Paris said. "It looks like one, works like one, and acts like one. It is a disgrace."

"It is something we need to do, so it is better to do it with SPLOST than property tax money, Paris said. On the SPLOST 3 Referendum, it stated: "Solid Waste Transfer Station/ Recycling Center Renovation and Expansion \$750,000."

After the SPLOST 3 was passed, on the 2009 audit, it stated: "Solid waste transfer station: Original \$833,000; Current -." (Note the original amount changed.)

That was for ZERO dollars to be spent on the transfer station. This very important project funding went to ZERO dollars after your vote.

In the County's Comprehensive Plan under "Improve Solid Waste Facility," Paris wrote, "Postponed, Lack of funding; Lower priority."

After your vote for the county to receive funding for this project, it was no longer a priority to the County Commissioner. SPLOST 3 ran from 2009-2015. Tax collections were over \$20 million.

Where did the money go? Here are a few examples:

The \$150,000 Horse Arena Project turned into \$643,864; Suches Community Center \$150,000 project turned into \$409,489; Grist Mill \$189,467 (This project was never presented to the taxpayers); Walking Trails and playground equipment \$202,082; Bridges and Meeks Park Improvements \$389,839; Amphitheater design \$122,527; Ball Fields upgrades \$74,159; Choestoe \$207,457; Shooting Range \$151,578.07 (that never happened); Broken down batting cages across from Meeks Park \$123,419.87; Farmers Market \$750,000 turned into \$1,866,542; Cannery added after the referendum \$494,815.15.

Paris said, "All of these are SPLOST

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Tales of Snakes

Fifty-five years ago I can remember spending the summer with my Papa and Granny in north Alabama. Trapptown was a great place for an 8-year-old boy to spend his summers. My grandparents were hard working people. Papa raised 30 acres of cotton, 25 acres of field corn,

25 head of beef cattle, two dairy cows, 15 hogs and 5,000 chickens. His public job was operating a mobile crew of people which de-beaked chickens.

His day began at 4:00 each morning and he nor my Granny ever sat down until supper time each evening. After chores on Saturdays we could go fishing, and Sundays were always a day of rest after church services. The hard work kept us all busy, and I loved every minute I spent with them. Time spent on the farm was a lot better than time spent at school. Back in those days we never started school until the week after Labor Day, so I was able to stay with my Papa and Granny until late August.

Each summer Union Hill Congregational Methodist Church held revival services during the second week of August, because this was right after lay-by in the cotton fields. Lay-by was the time at which the cotton plants became too tall to cultivate. All fertilization, cultivation, and weed control had to be completed before the plants became too tall to drive a tractor across without damaging the plant. This was also the point in time when the plants began to flower and set fruit. So, nothing else could be done to the plants until harvest time in October. Therefore, everyone could go to revival services at the little church. The church had two services each day, and on Saturday evening, a church "Singing" was held. Everyone was so busy at church that not much work was done during this week.

Thursday after the morning service we all went home and changed clothes. After lunch Papa asked me if I wanted to go to Ebb's Store. Well, he didn't have to twist my arm. We walked into the store and all of my grandfather's friends were there. I pulled a grape Nehi bellywash from the drink box and poured a bag of peanuts into the bottle. I pulled up a wooden drink box to sit on just like all the other men. As I sat down my Uncle Clay was telling what he knew about a "Spreading Adder" snake. He told us how the snake could make itself look bigger by pulling in a large amount of air. Next, Kayo told us about a Chicken Snake that he had killed which was 15 feet long. Uncle Bud then told about a boy he knew as a youth. One August afternoon on the way home from football practice this boy decided to go swimming with some friends. He jumped

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Sweet Sorghum

Growing sweet sorghum is part of culture and history in the mountains. It used to be more common and there were sorghum mills scattered all over the place. There are still a few people who grow sweet sorghum for syrup and carry on the tradition. Today let's talk about the history of sorghum, how it's grown, and how it's turned into syrup.

Sorghum is a member of the grass family. It originated in Northeastern Africa. Sorghum has been bred to fulfill four different modern day uses. Grain sorghum is used for flour. Forage sorghum is used to feed livestock. Biomass sorghum is used for bioenergy. Sweet sorghum is used for sorghum syrup. Sorghum made its way to America in the 1850s. Today, the Southeast, and particularly Appalachia, is known for sorghum syrup production.

Sorghum syrup production has declined over the years. This decline is largely due to its production being heavily labor intensive. Production has also declined as other glucose syrups have taken over. However, recently sorghum syrup has seen a bit of a resurgence with the increased interest in locally made products.

Sorghum is an important crop because it performs well under adverse soil conditions or drought. It does not require a lot of fertilizer, and adding too much nitrogen to the soil will decrease sugar levels. Typically sorghum is planted in May and ready to harvest at mid-September through early October. Weeds can be an issue with sorghum because it grows very slowly at the beginning of the season, giving the weeds a chance to grow up around it.

Sugarcane aphid is the biggest challenge of growing sweet sorghum. Sugarcane aphid is an invasive species that is resistant to many different insecticides, making it very difficult to control. It overwinters in south Florida and moves northward each year. If left untreated, sugar cane aphids will destroy a field of sorghum. When they start to arrive, you will see hundreds of them clustered on a plant, and they will feed off that plant until it dies and move onto the plant next to it. There are websites that are used to track the movement of sugarcane aphids northward each year to let growers know when they need to begin the treatment.

The key to producing good syrup is to have a high Brix level in the sorghum stalks. Brix is a measurement of sugar in an aqueous solution. One degree Brix is 1 gram of sucrose in 100 grams of aqueous solution. Deheading, or removing the seed head at the top of the plant will increase the Brix number. It is also important to

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Steve Rowe



Chamber of Commerce

We had a great time at Business After Hours last week and we want to thank Granddaddy Mimm's for hosting the event. Congratulations to Nottely Marina for being named the Business of the Quarter and our Ambassador of the Quarter, Missy Mashburn. It's businesses and individuals like these that continually give back to their community and make Blairsville-Union County a great place to live, work, and play.

The leaves are beginning to change and the Sorghum Festival is finally here. If you did not have a chance to go to the festival last weekend be sure to schedule it in for this weekend to enjoy the events and vendors, and to also support Enotah CASA. The syrup will be made by the same group that has for the last 52 years, so come and stock-up for the season.

Be sure you sign up for Halloween in the Park as we continue to add new activities to the event. If you or your group would like to be a part of this fun event be sure to contact the Chamber.

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

ing to fund more of the county operation.

Q. If the TSPLOST (Transportation Sales Tax) is passed, is there an opportunity for the county to actually lower our millage rate and thus our property tax rate?

A. Yes. We currently fund \$1.3 million per year out of our property taxes to fund Roads and Bridges. If the additional penny for the TSPLOST sales tax passes, at a minimum we should be able to reduce this general fund burden.

Q. Should we believe all the VOTE NO information that is being passed around and additional letters to the editor against TSPLOST?

A. NO!! The vast majority of the information that is being passed around is either inaccurate or in some cases just an outright lie.

Q. If we see or hear something about the TSPLOST being bad for Union County, how can we get a straight answer to a question or concern?

A. Simply send me an email at lamar@uniongov.com or call the office at 706-439-6000 and leave a message and someone will get back to you.

Q. Is there a cost to the people who pay the sales tax in Union County to fund TSPLOST?

A. Yes, there will be an additional penny on a dollar sales tax. So if you go to the grocery store and spend \$100 on groceries, you will have an additional charge of \$1.00 in TSPLOST sales tax. You will not be charged on any fuel products or gas. All other state sales tax exemptions apply, such as prescription medicines are exempt from sales tax.

Q. We have heard that other counties in Georgia have passed a TSPLOST. Which ones are they?

A. There are 33 counties in Georgia with a TSPLOST currently. In extreme north

Georgia, there are five counties with TSPLOST. Lumpkin County has passed it as well as Habersham, Banks, Murray, and Walker counties. There are also an additional 62 counties that have a regional TSPLOST and two counties with each. This brings a total of 95 counties in Georgia with some type of TSPLOST sales tax.

Q. What can TSPLOST funds be used for?

A. TSPLOST can be used for road maintenance including paving, widening, surface treatment, striping, signage, culvert repairs, shoulder improvements, grading, bridge work, purchasing road department vehicles and equipment, and other road operations.

Q. Why TSPLOST now?

A. We have been considering putting TSPLOST on the ballot for the last few years, but we believe now is a great time to put this to voters to decide to offset the increased expense of maintenance due to the increase in traffic. Unfortunately, due to the tremendous amount of tourism we have experienced in the last two years, traffic continues to increase. More and more people are here spending their money in our county, so their sales tax dollars can help fund the tremendous amount of road work and maintenance that has to be done. This helps to reduce the burden on property owners.

Q. When can we vote on TSPLOST?

A. Early voting begins October 12, 2021 at the Union County Courthouse downstairs in the Jury Assembly Room, and will continue on weekdays October 12 through October 29 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on two Saturdays, October 16 and October 23 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The voting day at precincts will be Tuesday, November 2, 2021 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Walters-Taylor ... continued from Page 4A

with commonality in branches of service, brings out the best in members of the service brotherhood.

The number of Korean veterans is getting smaller and smaller, and so it's very nice when my husband runs across somebody who was also in Korea, and they can share memories and war stories and connect on a level that is very foreign to civilians. The term brotherhood is not taken lightly.

I am very proud of my husband's service; he was a tadpole stationed on an island off

the north Korea western coast. Recently on a trip out west, Rob was able to reconnect with a gentleman who attended basic training at the same Air Force Base. It was a joy to see those two boys — and yes I say boys, because they were taken back to their youth — enjoy speaking about all the places that they had been, the people that they met, and the things that they did with such enthusiasm and verve. I hope that all veterans are able to do the same.

Until we muse again, I bid you, "At Ease!"

Pittman... continued from Page 4A

(sales tax) projects that were voted on by you, the citizens of the county. The one exception is the Bryon Herbert Reece Homeplace (BHR) project being constructed by Grant funds." SPLOST BHR \$199,136.

The solid waste transfer station upgrade became lower priority and lacked funding so these other projects could be funded. The county is still

spending our tax money on some of these same projects out of SPLOST 4 and SPLOST 5. Our tax money has become a slush fund. Do you really trust this government with another 1-cent tax?

Vote NO for the TSPLOST. All figures were obtained from Open Records Requests.

Best Regards,
Linda Pittman

Spry... continued from Page 4A

ily Dry Cleaners and explained the situation. He immediately responded with kindness and professionalism. Chris told me to bring him the dress and he would try to help. They worked on the dress for several hours, and Chris later told me that he really did not know if he would be able to clean it or not, but he gave it all he had and miraculously he saved the day for our little girl!

We can never express how grateful we all were when Allison walked down the aisle

in her beautiful white wedding gown... it was like the stains were never even there. Thank you, Chris, and all your staff who worked so hard that day. Allison looked like a princess, and we are so thankful that you cared enough to work late into the evening to make our bride's dreams come true!

Sincerely,
Al and Beneta Haywood and Allison and Collin Clark
Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart. — Psalm 37:4



Cummings... continued from Page 4A

from a bridge into a creek filled with "Cotton Mouth Moccasins." We were told the boy died before they got him out of the water. As the afternoon wore on each tale became even more outlandish.

Uncle Dan told us about a "Hoop Sanke" he encountered as a boy. He was down close to Liberty Hill hoeing cotton in a bottom right next to the area known as the Dismals. He heard a noise up on the hill above the field. He looked up and spied this hoop snake. It was climbing up a small tree, and the birds in the tree were all trying to protect a nest of baby birds. Uncle Dan picked a rock and threw it at the snake. That snake saw my uncle and grabbed its tail and began rolling down the hill at him. My uncle looked Pogy right in the eye and said, "You know them hoop snakes will grab their tails and roll at you. When they get close to you they'll stob you with the hard part of their tail, and they's lots of poison in that tail." When the snake got close to him he jumped out of the way, and the snake stobbed

a tree instead of his leg. Dan told us that the snake crawled off and he finished hoeing out that row of cotton. The next day he went back to the cotton field and the tree which the snake had stobbed with its tail was dead.

Skeeter spoke up and told us the same thing had happened to him a few years ago. He happened to be in a corn field hoeing corn when he spied a Hoop Snake rolling down a hill toward him. He didn't have time to jump out of the way, so he placed the hoe between him and the snake. When the snake tried to stob him it hit the hoe instead. Skeeter told us that he was shaking all over as the snake crawled off. Then he noticed something very strange. That hoe handle began to swell up. He laid that hoe on the ground, and within 20 minutes that handle swelled up to the size of a large tree! Skeeter left the field and went to get a wagon and some help in the form of Papa and this brother Pick. The three of them sawed that log into 12 foot sections and then loaded them into the wagon. They hauled them to the sawmill on Cummings Creek where they sawed the logs into lumber. They took the logs over to Little Bear Creek where they built themselves a camp cabin. Every man in the store was trying to compose themselves and not laugh. My Papa was grinning from ear to ear. All of them with the exception of a younger fellow by the name of Roy. He looked at Skeeter and said, "I didn't know you had a fish camp on the Little Bear Creek. Why haven't I seen it?"

Without cracking a smile Skeeter replied, "Well, when them boards all dried out I reckon all that poison from that Hoop Snake's tail also dried out. Anyway them boards all shrank and that cabin became the size of a matchbox." Clay and Dan could hold their composure no longer. They began to laugh. Soon everyone in the store was laughing. Uncle Hollis WeHunt laughed so hard that he lost his balance and fell backwards off the drink box on which he was sitting. Roy soon realized he'd been had and let his chin down on his chest. All he could do was to laugh with the rest of us. As we sat in revival services that evening I noticed Papa would chuckle every now and then. I knew he

Williams... continued from Page 4A

harvest at the time when Brix is at its peak. After it peaks, it will start to decline.

Once the sorghum is harvested, it must be pressed to extract the juice out of it. Historically this was done with a mule-powered press, but there are electric ones available now. The juice is allowed to settle and then run through the pan. The pan is over a fire that cooks out the water in the juice. Typically, a producer will get 1 gallon of syrup for 8-10 gallons of juice. After cooking, the syrup is ready to sell.

If you are interested in growing sorghum, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

of God in Christ is still the primary need of the world around us. Anything less is not just inadequate; it is in realty not historic, redemptive Christianity." The Scripture anticipates the allure of a form of godliness without power (2 Tim. 3:5). Any rewrite of the loving, powerful, and true story of Christianity is such a form.

The older I am, the more I enjoy what stays the same. What God has said and done need no rewrite because eternal truth stays the same, cultural waves and winds notwithstanding. (mountainchristian@brmemc.net)

Dyer... continued from Page 4A

facility. It enables us to train career and volunteer firefighters, especially new recruits, in the many firefighting skills which keeps us prepared and helps lower our ISO rating. We are most proud of the fact that we can also benefit surrounding communities by hosting other departments.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

There is no fee to participate or to attend.

A special thanks to everyone that participated and donated to the Sporting Clays Tournament which allows us to give back to our local veterans. And thanks to the VFW for their assistance in making this possible.

Please remember to thank our health care workers for all they are doing to keep the community healthy and helping us to keep life Better in Blairsville!

Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse

October 1, 2021
in memory of **Bill Meeks**
in remembrance of his birthday
By: Ginger and Terry Meeks

October 22, 2021
in memory of **John J. Meeks**
in remembrance of his birthday
By: Ginger and Terry Meeks

Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493

was thinking of all his wonderful friends.

Most of these men are

now gone to their reward. But, they left a little boy with the most wonderful memories.