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Holiday Sales" Section **INSIDE** **FREE**

Highlands' Newspaper

Volume 2, Number 51

Locally Owned & Operated

Friday, Dec. 24, 2004

- At ...on the Verandah on Lake Sequoyah, Dinner and piano entertainment from 6 p.m. Dec. 26-31.

- The Mountain View group of Alcoholics Anonymous meets in the remodeled basement room of the Presbyterian Church sanctuary, in Highlands Mondays at 8 p.m.; Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m. (women only); Wed and Fri at noon.

- The holidays at Highlands Wine & Cheese – Wine Flights Friday and Saturday: 4:30-6:30. Closed Christmas Day. Open New Year's Day. Holiday Sale in progress. As always, Wines by the glass and cheese plates available Wednesday through Saturday: 1:30 until 4:30. Complimentary Tastings Saturday: 1 until 4:30.

Dec. 24

- Come Celebrate the Warmth of Christmas with a Christmas Eve Candlelight service: Including a Christmas Narrative and Musical Christmas Specials at Community Bible Church, December 24th at 7 p.m.. Call for more information 526-4685.

- Christmas Eve Service at Highlands United Methodist Church at 5:30 p.m. It will be a family-friendly, communion and candlelight service. All are invited! The church is located at 315 Main Street.

- Carols and visits from St. Nick, 4:30 p.m. at the Episcopal Church.

- Family Eucharist Service at the Episcopal Church.

- All Macon County Landfills and Convenience Centers will be closed. Reopen, Monday, Dec. 27.

Dec. 25

- Christmas Dinner at Main Street Inn sponsored by the Highlands Innkeepers Assn. to benefit Habitat for Humanity. For reservations, call 526-2590.

- Carols and Holy Eucharist at 11 p.m. at the Episcopal Church.

- Macon County Landfills and Convenience Centers will be closed. Reopen, Monday, Dec. 27.

Jan. 6

- GED classes taught in Spanish to start at the Literacy Council of Highlands at the Peggy Crosby Center at 5 p.m. and every Thursday there after through April. For more information, call Breta Stroud at 526-9938, ext. 240.

Jan. 8

- HOME VG B-Ball at the Rec Park at 3 p.m.

Shotwell makes strong case for Aug. 10 school start

By Kim Lewicki

Macon County School officials aren't giving up the "school start date fight" easily.

At the Dec. 13 school board meeting, Superintendent Dr. Rodney Shotwell presented the letter he sent Elsie Leak, Associate Superintendent, Curriculum and School Reform Services

in Raleigh pleading the county's case for an Aug. 10 school start date rather than the state-mandated Aug. 25.

He cites educational programs and educational opportunities as outlined in Senate Bill 656 as reasons for starting school Aug. 10 in Macon County.

"Senate Bill 656 encourages local LEAs to begin forming cooperative edu-

cational opportunities for high school students. The Governor's desire is that early colleges and "learn to earn" schools will strengthen high schools. Superior Court Judge Howard Manning mentioned in his latest briefing that high schools will be required to make some changes, and one of the keys to

■See **SCHOOL** page 2

Residents ask town to help pay for sewer lines

By Kim Lewicki

For about a month, the Town Board has heard requests for sewer extensions — some due to failing septic systems, others due to new development, or the revamping of old systems.

At the Dec. 15 Town Board meeting, commissioners denied a request for partial payment by the town to upgrade the S.B. Association system estimated to cost \$80,500. The S.B. Association is made up of 67 residents in Shelby Place and the back side of Highlands Country Club.

"The residents want a commitment from the town that it will take the system over before they pay to upgrade it," said their representative engineer Bronce Pesterfield.

Two years ago, commissioners agreed to take over the ailing S.B. Association system once it was brought up to town and state standards.

Pesterfield also asked if the town might help pay for the S.B. Association upgrade.

But Commissioner Herb James said the town agreed to take over the system, not to pay for the upgrade.

But Commissioner Amy Patterson said she understood why the S.B. Association was asking.

■See **SEWER** page 5

Christmas Dinner for 'Habitat'



Photo by Jim Lewicki

This annual event will again take place at the Main Street Inn. The total of the proceeds of the feast will go to Habitat for Humanity of Macon County. Over the past three years, the dinner has raised more than \$11,000 for Habitat for Humanity. Seating on Christmas Day will begin at 11:30 a.m. and continue through 4 p.m. Cost is \$29.95 per person. To make reservations or for more information, call the Main Street Inn at 526-2590.

Preparing for future water use

By Kim Lewicki

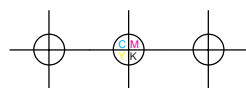
These days everyone is obsessed with growth.

For most — in some capacity or another — growth means money in the bank. But everyone wants to know what growth means for town and county infrastructure and who will

pay for it.

At a recent Macon County Commissioners meeting, the board adopted the Highlands Plateau Water System Consolidation Study Grant Project to learn how much water can be tapped beyond Highlands proper.

■See **WATER** page 21



Hospital Auxiliary Tree of Lights

Bells (in honor of living friends and loved ones) and Stars (in memory of deceased friends and loved ones) will be placed on the Hospital Auxiliary Christmas Tree. These tributes are available with a gift of \$25 or more.

All money will be used to fund scholarships for students planning to enter the health care field.

Complete the form below (please print) and mail to:

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Auxiliary

Attn: Tree of Lights

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265 Oak St.; P.O. Box 2703,

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(828) 526-0782

email: highlandseditor@aol.com

Publisher/Editor – Kim Lewicki

Copy Editor/Proofreader

Tom Merchant

Production – Darlene Melcher

Circulation & Tech. Support –

Jim Lewicki

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... SCHOOL continued from page 1

this reform is a strong collaboration with the local community colleges," wrote Shotwell. "In Macon County, we have been working toward the goal of bringing more educational opportunities to our students, thus reinforcing the philosophy of our governor and the court system's analysis in the *Leandro* case. In doing so, we are partnering with a local community college whereby qualified high school students earn college credit courses while attending high school."

Shotwell said to reach these goals, the Macon County school calendar must coincide with the Southwestern Community College calendar.

"Our current school calendar restrictions (with an Aug. 25 start date) prevent us from implementing these options for our students," said Shotwell.

He said Macon County is a rural county where education is the pathway for success. "However, our dropout rate has not declined enough to satisfy me, our teachers, or our community," said Shotwell. "As long as students are leaving the system, we feel the system needs to be adjusted to address the diverse learning styles."

Plans for educational opportunities include enhancing and recreating the high school model to address the needs of all students.

"Our agreement with our local community college will provide testing, guidance, and instruction to enable adult students and minor dropouts to complete the requirements for an adult high school diploma."

He said a major fiber loop will be online next year that will enable Macon County to connect Southwestern courses and the high school courses seamlessly.

"It is crucial that the local school calendar and community college calendar correspond in order for this to succeed," he said. "If we are allowed to begin school around Aug. 10, we will be able to align our students' course work with the proposed programs at Southwestern Community College."

Specific programs are envisioned for all three high schools in Macon County — Nantahala K-12, Highlands K-12, and Franklin High School 9-12.

• For traditional high school students, SCC classes will be offered at Union School, where as many as six community college courses can be offered during all four periods of the day. There will be a student shuttle service for students at Franklin High and High-

lands School. Students at Nantahala School can drive 45 minutes to Union School, or take the courses through ITV network.

• Also planned is an Early College program that will include a public safety component. Students can choose between an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice or EMT. This would be the first Early College school of its kind in the state. Graduates of the program will supply an economic need in Macon County. Students not interested in a "public safety" degree can enroll in a general education college transfer program.

"Under the current calendar requirements, we will be limited in our partnership with the community college," said Shotwell. "There will be scheduling conflicts in the second semester due to the fact that our high school first semester will not be completed until two and one-half weeks after the community college begins the second semester." Nor could students graduate early and begin work at SCC or at Western Carolina University because under the current calendar mandates, schedules would overlap and prevent students from taking advantage of these opportunities.

Shotwell said if the waiver is granted, he would want the elementary schools and middle schools to start at this time.

"Due to geographic barriers, we run a single bus system, picking up anyone from kindergarten to grade 12 on a single route. If the high school students are on a different schedule, our efficiency rating for our funding formula would be lower and we would have to employ bus drivers for two hundred days rather than one hundred eighty as we do now," he said.

Also Nantahala and Highlands Schools are K-12 schools and planning staff development for the K-8 teachers would be impossible unless the K-12 schools are granted a waiver along with Franklin High School. "The K-8 teachers at Nantahala and Highlands Schools would have workdays on a different schedule than the other K-8 schools in the Franklin area," said Shotwell.

He said he wants Macon County to be on the cutting edge of reform while providing educational opportunities for all students and make North Carolina the best education state in the nation by 2010.

The Macon County School Board is awaiting a reply from Raleigh.

• **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** •

Land Purchase for Bascom-Louise Art Center

Dear Editor,

On Nov. 15, the Bascom-Louise Gallery bought five acres of land with the intention of building a new Art Center. The Bascom-Louise has traveled a remarkable distance in the last twenty years —from a room to display regional art to an overcrowded, multi-purpose, bustling art center. We have outgrown our space and have no room to expand. We have seen our budgets and giving grow to meet our program driven needs. With this purchase of the Crane property, we will be able to meet the spatial needs facing our bright future.

We would publicly like to thank those making this wonderful occasion possible. First of all, Mark Meadows, Ed Bohling, and our Building Committee who worked hard to research all available sites. Mark and John Cleveland, the real estate agents involved, forfeited their commissions. This was our first donation and it was a sizeable one. Secondly, thanks to Macon Bank, which graciously agreed to finance this purchase and could not have been a better facilitator. Jack Mayer agreed to close the transaction at no expense to the Bascom-Louise.

A heartfelt thank you is in order to those far-sighted individuals who came forward even before there was a formal campaign to contribute to our down payment. They were: Curtis and Amelia James, Bob and Cathy Fisher, Wright and Betsy Turner, Eleanor Harrison, Jim and Marsha Meadows, Jean and Jim Callier, Gay Kahn, Barry and Paula Jones, Carter and Nancy Bruns, Sarah Morgan Wingfield, Judge and Mrs. Carlysle Overstreet, Robert and Corbin Tucker, Charlotte and Finley Merry, Margo and Julian Franklin, Ashley Walker, and Helen and Fred Cooper.

We will kick off our Capital Funds Drive next Spring and will ask all of you to be a part of this exciting plan to give Highlands and the neighboring counties a dynamic Visual Art Center that will be used for decades to come. We thank you all for your generous support of the Bascom-Louise through the years and ask that you continue to think of us in the future.

May God bless us all in the coming year and allow us all to continue to enjoy the blessings of Highlands.

**Robert Tucker, Chairman
Bascom-Louise Art Center**

• **OBITUARY** •

Claud A. Henry, Sr.

Claud A. Henry, Sr. age 80, of Mountain Rest, SC died Monday, December 13, 2004 at his residence. He was a native of Macon County, the son of late Claud and Lecy McCall Henry. He was married to Mable Marie Henry who died away August 13, 2003.

He was a US Army Veteran of WWII. He was self-employed in the timber business and was a disabled veteran. He was of the Baptist faith.

He is survived by three daughters, Louise Henry of Anderson, SC, Patricia Henry of Portland, OR and Irene Wood of Brevard, NC; three sons, Jimmy Henry of Greenville, SC, Carson Henry of Westminster, SC and Claud Henry, Jr. of Walhalla, SC. Two sisters, Hattie Henry and Marjorie Henry Carter both of Mountain Rest, SC. Eight grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren also survive. He was preceded in death by one grandson.

Funeral services were held Thursday, December 16 at 2 p.m. in the Chapel of Bryant Funeral Home in Highlands with Rev. J.L. Sutton officiating. Burial was in the Highlands Memorial Park. Cecil McCall, Richard Shope, Jason Collins, Phillip Collins, Nathan Head, Claud Henry, Jr., Carson Henry, and Jimmy Henry served as pallbearers.

The VFW Post #7339 and American Legion Post #108 will conduct complete military graveside rites.

Bryant Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

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• LAUGHING AT LIFE •

Celebrating the Prince of Peace

(Merry Christmas to everyone)

Whether you are Jew, Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu, most non-Christian, peace loving, intelligent humans living today agree that Jesus Christ was special, a holy man of God, a man of peace. Some non-believers go even further and call Jesus a great prophet.

Christians believe Jesus is all these things and more. We believe Jesus is the son of God; that he is God. We are about to celebrate His birthday, even though He was probably born in early fall, when census' were usually taken. Most Christians agree this is their most important day of the year. We call it Christmas. Having given you all this information you already know, let me tell you something you may not know or even care about. Well, here I go anyway.

I was born a pagan. I didn't know of the Prince of Peace until I entered the first grade for the second time at the age of seven. I had flunked the first grade (can you believe it?) in public school, mostly for disorderly conduct and other anti-social behavior.

My parents, in a state of panic, sent me to a Catholic school, not for religious purposes, but because Catholic schools were big on discipline and torturing children. Later, I learned from my parents they had told the nuns, "Whatever it takes, you have our support." They didn't know you should never tell a school teaching nun, from that era, the sky is the limit. It took the school less than a year to straighten me out. Better still, they introduced me to Jesus Christ. For that and the discipline, I am eternally grateful.

Flash ahead 60 years since that first day at Saint Bridget's school and I will tell you my love for Jesus Christ has grown within me over the many years.

Furthermore, I am very strongly aware of just how much my Christian religion is bound with Judaism.



Fred Wooldridge

Although some Christians don't like to think about it, Jesus is a Jew. It is His heritage. The son of God is a Jew, making our two religions undeniably woven together. I believe that Christians and Jews should spend more time dwelling on that fact to better understand who we are and where we came from.

If you are a person who can only believe Jesus was just a man, then you must believe he was a good Jewish man who prayed in the Temples and celebrated the Passover. If you can just buy into that, then you must also believe He was a man of peace.

My belief is special, for I am convinced that Jesus Christ has saved me from dying many times. Up until I retired from the cliffs of Highlands, I have always had a risky job. That was my calling. I have had this sense that He was present, even in the worse times of my life, keeping me alive because He was not ready for me to leave life and move on. Hopefully He is not finished with me yet, even now, when the risks have waned. There seems to be a special bond I can't explain or prove. I just know it's there.

So on Christmas Day, when Christian churches are filled to the brim to pay homage to the Son of God, our family will also gather together, pray and give thanks for all that we have been given. Afterwards, there will be presents, a meal with all the trimmings and lots and lots of laughter.

I will take time out from this busy, fun day, find a place where I can be alone, and again, privately thank Jesus Christ for allowing me to live this life.

No matter what religion you are, my wish to all of you is that you find love, kindness and most importantly, forgiveness in your heart on this day when Christians celebrate the birth of the Son of God, The Prince of Peace.

Merry Christmas!

Literacy Coucil to offer GED classes in Spanish

The Literacy Council of Highlands is going to have a new class as part of its on-going GED program - classes taught in Spanish.

Beginning January, along with the regular GED classes, a GED preparatory class will be instructed in Spanish. This class is designed to help those in the Spanish-speaking community who are still in the process of learning English or may already have good conversational English but need class instruction in their own language.

Ms. Belem Torres, Highlands School part-time reading instructor for students Kindergarten through 5th grade, will teach the class. She speaks both English and Spanish fluently.

The GED classes are set for every Thursday at 5 p.m. beginning January 6 through April.

Contact Breta Stroud at 526-9938 ext. 240 for more information.

...

El Literacy Council De Highlands esta annunciano nuevas clases parte del programa de GED. Empesando en Enero junto con

nuestras otras clases regulares del GED. Nosotros tambien ofreceremos el GED (diplma para la secundaria) con instrucciones en



Belem Torres

Espanol. Esta clase esta deseyada para ayudar anuestra comunidad en Espanol, Quien estan en proceso de aprender Engles o para aquellos que ya tienen Buena conversacion en Engles, pero que frefieren tomar esta clase del GED en su Idioma Espanol.

Nosotros estamos honorados de tener a Ms. Belem Torres como Instrutora de esta nueva clase. La senorita Torres Viene de Kansas y por cino meses ya esta viviendo en Highlands. Ella tambien estra trabajando en nuestra Escuela de Highalnds como instrutora de lectura con los ninos de K-5th grado. Ella es Bilingue en Espanol y Engles.

Esta nueva clase sera dada cada jueves alas 5 p.m., empesando en Enero 6 hasta Abril.

Porfavor contact Breta Stroud en la Lilteracy Council de Highlands al 526-9938 ext. 240 para mas informacion.

... SEWER continued from page 1

"It's true that new subdivisions have to completely pay for infrastructure before the town takes it over, but there have been situations where a neighborhood needs sewer in which the town has participated," she said.

Recently the board agreed to pay 25% of the cost of a gravity sewer line located behind the Fairway Condos in Highlands Country Club which will serve the 24 units plus six residents, one of which has a failing

septic system. The estimated total cost of the project is \$83,444.

Meanwhile, five homeowners on Oak Street have asked the town about extending sewer in their area where one septic system has failed. Town engineer Lamar Nix estimates the job will cost \$81,000.

The homeowners have not yet come together to discuss options.

Traditionally, the town doesn't pay for sewer extensions unless it's on the board's own motion.

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• ALL ABOUT WINES •

'Tis the season of closing out one vintage of our life and moving on to another

Wow, this place is different." I hear comments like this often as returning customers walk in the shop. "You've moved stuff around...and you always have new things. It's fun coming in here," they say.



Bert Mobley
Highlands Wine & Cheese

As it should be. We're a wine shop. Things are supposed to be different — and not just the gift items and the shop's arrangement. That's part of what makes the world of wine so fascinating. The labels may look the same from year to year — the same chateau facade or bird or grape cluster — but, of course, the wine connoisseur and the novice alike realize that the label is different in a very important way. The date. The previous vintage is gone, replaced by the next. The change is constant.

Some wines retain good quality year in and year out. Many of the wineries with huge productions strive to maintain that dependable consistency each year, and some would say that they've succeeded in removing the importance of vintage. For the general consumer, I guess that's a good thing.

For those of us who love wine, however, we know that the great wines will never lose the significance of vintage. A couple of more days of sunshine, or a rain that comes a few days earlier this year than last: these factors make all the difference. And all the fun and challenge. Learning about wines is ongoing because each year, the wine is new and unique.

At this time of the year, as we close out one vintage of our life to move on to another, a similar perspective is needed. We can opt

for a generic life, where one year is not much different from the next. Or we can choose fine life like fine wine, recognizing, realizing, tasting the differences in color and texture and essence. The years can merge together, all poured from some big utilitarian vat. Or

we can see each year as a crafted art, precious in its multitude of distinctions.

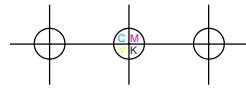
If our senses are dull, our expectations reduced, we may have to retrain ourselves to love the minute factors which make the years — the days — of our lives unique. It's a good thing that Christmas and New Year's come together. Christmas gives us an opportunity to reflect on something out of the ordinary, to prepare ourselves to accept the newness of the New Year, to appreciate what we otherwise might miss.

Certainly, the extraordinary wonder and mystery of Christmas is a major part of its allure for all of us. But the more I think about it, its the earthiness of Christmas that attracts me. Incarnation. God with us. Flesh and blood. Dirt in the fingernails.

A popular song a few years ago asked, "What if God were one of us?" Huh....that's what Christmas is. We live in an extraordinary ordinary world: in the midst of the refuse, God resides.

A number of years ago I knew a girl who wanted to stop eating meat — not because she had philosophical reasons for becoming a vegetarian. No. Simply this: she was a city girl: the only meat she knew came in Styrofoam and plastic. She had no clue how it got there — the

• See WINE page 8



BOOK REVIEW

WITH KATIE BRUGGER

The novels of Graham Greene

This year is the 100 year anniversary of Graham Greene's birth. I read a biography of him earlier this fall in The New Yorker and it whetted my appetite to re-read some of his novels.

One of the things that I enjoy about Mr. Greene is that he wrote a wide range of books, from chronicles of spiritual conflict to travel books to spy novels to adventure stories.

Mr. Greene traveled extensively during his life, which is evidenced not only in his travel books but also in the settings of his novels: colonial backwaters in Africa (The Heart of the Matter) and exotic cities such as Havana (Our Man in Havana). The Hudson Library has quite a number of his novels, so I grabbed three to read.

If you have read any of Greene's works you will have noticed that many of his novels deal with the Catholic Church. I noted with interest in the New Yorker article that when Mr. Greene was a young man he fell in love with a Catholic woman who would only agree to marry him if he converted to Catholicism. He eventually decided she was worth it, but his writings make it clear that he had a tortured relationship with his adopted faith. I am not a Catholic, so some of the specific torments of his Catholic characters seem strange, but I think that many people can relate to their spiritual struggles.

My favorite of this genre is The Power and the Glory, first published in 1940. This is the story of a priest in Mexico after the Catholic Church has been outlawed by a revolutionary government. All priests are required to recant their beliefs and marry, and if they refuse they are shot. Padre Jose has eluded the authorities for two years, finding refuge with the peasants and serving them mass with carefully concealed candles and wine. But the authorities are closing in on him and the peasants are

being threatened for sheltering him. Padre Jose began to drink whiskey during this period, and he cannot accept this failure.

The novel is largely the self-reflections of this hunted haunted priest: Should he keep trying to serve the people even though he is bringing them trouble? Should he care more about his own safety and leave the country? Is his faith really strong or is he just stubborn? Is he just a no-good whiskey priest? I was deeply moved as this man endured tremendous privation and danger in the name of his faith, yet questioned whether he was a really good man.

The people in power outlawed the Church because of the corruption and decadence of the priests: "...he (a police lieutenant) remembered the smell of incense in the churches of his boyhood, the candles and the laciness and the self-esteem, the immense demands made from the altar steps by men who didn't know the meaning of sacrifice. The old peasants knelt there before the holy images with their arms held out in the attitude of the cross: tired by the long days' labor in the plantations, they squeezed out a further mortification. And the priest came round with the collecting-bag taking their centavos, abusing them for their small, comforting sins, and sacrificing nothing at all in return—except a little sexual indulgence." (p. 18)

Padre Jose had been one of these soft rich men, but when he became an outlaw he began to understand humanity and experience the universal love of a saint. When looking at his picture on a police station wall, Padre Jose thought to himself "what an unbearable creature he had been in those days—and yet in those days he had been comparatively innocent. That was another mystery: it sometimes seemed to him that venial sins—impatience, an

See BOOK REVIEW page 15

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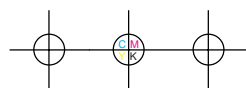
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'Playing hockey'

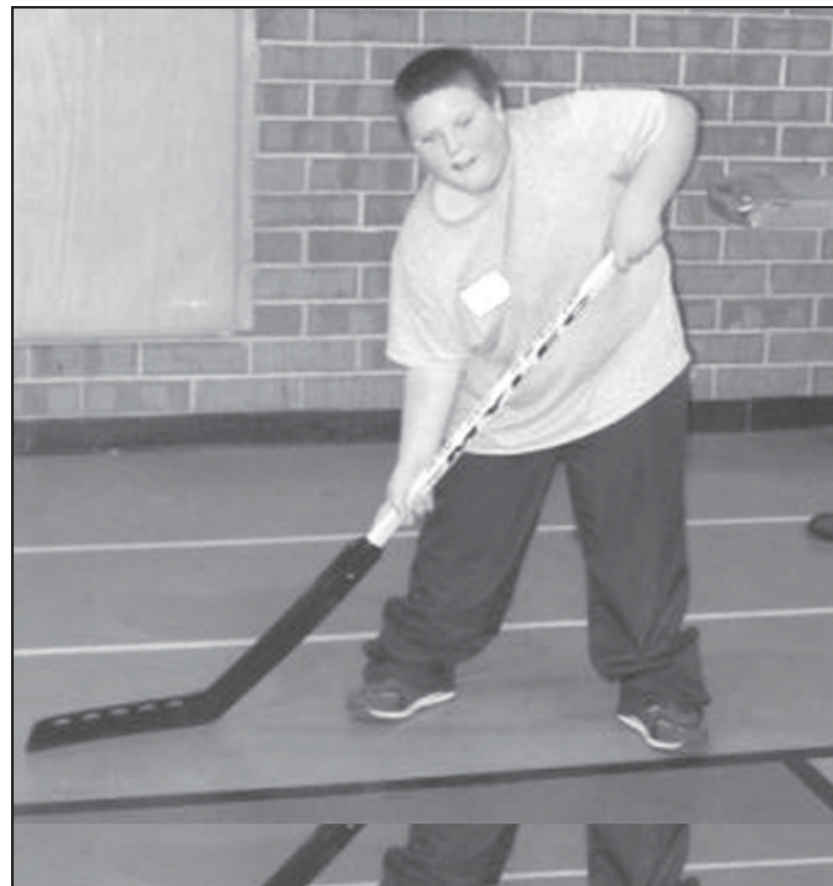


Photo by Karen Hasbrouck

David Webb prepares to block a puck as he participates in Macon County's first Winter Special Olympics on December 3. The event was held in Franklin at the county Rec Park. Students learned about and participated in Winter Olympic games such as bowling, volleyball, soccer, golf and tennis. Unlike the Spring Special Olympics, the Winter Olympics was not competitive.

... WINE continued from page 7

process of life and death that it takes for cows and chickens and pigs to become a part of us. Before she would eat meat again, she wanted to know something of the cost.

God with us. Not wrapped in cellophane, sterilized, immune from the pains of life and death, immune from the adventure and joy.

The "Holy Day" season is a call for us to get back in touch with the details of life, to know

that vintages matter, that not only is next year magnificently distinct from the previous, each day is magnificently distinct from each other. IF we train our palates to notice. IF we drink good wine, hold the glass to the light to notice the nuances of color as we swirl. IF we inhale deeply and taste fully, recognizing the flavors that life offers us, taking nothing for granted, savoring and relishing.

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Playhouse hires artistic director

The Board of Directors of the Highlands Play House have named Broadway and cabaret veteran Robert Ray as artistic director for the 2005 season.

Ray made his Broadway debut in the 1980 hit revival of the Rogers and Hammerstein musical "Oklahoma!". The same year he was nominated for four New York City Cabaret Awards, winning two.

For the past 25 years, he has performed in Atlanta at The Alliance Theater, Theater of the Stars, Theater in the Square, 14th Street Theater and the Canton Theater.

He has performed as a solo for The Atlanta Symphony, The Atlanta Pops, The Modernaires and The Robert Ray Orchestra, which headlined "First Night in Atlanta," Underground Atlanta's New Year's Eve Peach Drop and the Lenox Square 4th of July Celebrations.

Known as "Atlanta's Cabaret King," Ray has produced, directed and performed in cabaret shows in such landmarks as The Ambassador Club Atlanta and Gene and Gabe's Upstairs.

More recently, he has produced two original shows at Libby's Cabaret. The productions were chosen to appear at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in

Charleston. They were "Somewhere Over the Rainbow ... the Harold Arlen Songbook" and "Too Marvelous for Words" featuring the lyrics of Georgia's own Johnny Mercer.

"Two Marvelous for Words" played at the Highlands Playhouse for two nights in October and will return by popular demand for the first show of the 2005 season.

This show has also appeared in Macon, Ga., at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame where Ray and fellow cast members and a six piece band recorded the show in its entirety on CD.

Currently Ray is producing and directing the 75th Anniversary of the Fox Theater in downtown Atlanta. This will open Dec. 26.

In February, he will direct the The Atlanta Lyric Theater's productions of "Jerry's Girls." Ray will bring "Jerry's Girls" to Highlands as the Playhouse's third show of the season.

The second is to be announced soon.

The final play of the season will be the Pulitzer Prize winning "Driving Miss Daisy." This play was made into an Academy Award winning film starring Jessica Tandy, Shirley MacLaine, Dolly Parton, Julia Roberts and Darel Hannah.

Dr. Hugh Conway of Clemson U at JMCA's Annual Meeting

Cynthia Strain
JMCA Chair

The star of the show at JMCA's Annual Meeting last week was Dr. Hugh Conway, director of the beetle rearing lab at Clemson University. He brought good news that the thousands of beetles that were released last spring to control the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid appear to be doing their job. Site monitoring indicated that the beetles are reproducing, spreading, and lowering the populations of adelgids at release sites.

That is good news indeed for the

Jackson Macon Conservation Alliance and the many generous donors who have contributed to this

expensive effort. Over 100,000 predator beetles were released in 2004 in the national forests of the Highlands-Cashiers area. Working with the U.S. Forest Service, more releases are planned for this winter and through the spring. The lab is also expanding their space to begin

rearing a second beetle, the *laricobius nigrinus*. According to Dr. Conway, this will provide "the one-two punch" for more successful adelgid control.



Dr. Hugh Conway

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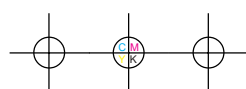
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Highlands School New Century Scholars participate in team-building experience

By Jennifer Jones

Contributor

On a beautiful fall day, Highlands New Century Scholars traveled to Camp Merrie-Woode in Cashiers to participate in team building and problem solving activities as part of their scholarship requirements. In addition to these activities, the group learned different survival techniques when alone in the woods.

These initiative exercises were provided in part by a gracious gift from the Leadership Highlands Class of 2004 through the Highlands Chamber of Commerce.

The New Century Scholars Program, which began in 1995, as

a collaborative educational effort among the public schools in Macon, Jackson and Swain counties and Southwestern Community College which targets "high potential" students at the end of sixth grade and provides extra support to those students through their middle school and high school years. Upon graduation from high school, a qualifying student is awarded a scholarship to Southwestern Community College.

For more information about the New Century Scholars program, please contact Jennifer Jones at 524-4414 or jennifer.jones@mcsk-12.org.

New members join hospital board

The Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Board of Trustees has four new members as it begins its work for the 2004-2005 year.

Julian K. Franklin, Donald C. Mullen, MD, and Pollyanna B. Touzalin of Highlands, and Thomas R. Sawyer of Glenville officially joined the board earlier this fall. None of the four have previously served on the board. And Cashiers family physician Mark Heffington, MD, returns to the board as an ex-officio member by virtue of his position as chief of the medical staff.

Once again the board will be headed by Cashiers resident Walter K. Nussbaum, who was elected to another term as chairman. Tony Potts of Highlands will serve as secretary of the board. Joining Nussbaum on the board's executive committee for the coming year are Clem Patton (Highlands), and Brien Peterkin (Cashiers).



• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Why December 25?

For the church's first three centuries, Christmas wasn't in December—or on the calendar at all.

By Elesha Coffman
Contributor

It's very tough for us North Americans to imagine Mary and Joseph trudging to Bethlehem in anything but, as Christina Rossetti memorably described it, "the bleak mid-winter," surrounded by "snow on snow on snow." To us, Christmas and December are inseparable. But for the first three centuries of Christianity, Christmas wasn't in December—or on the calendar anywhere.

If observed at all, the celebration of Christ's birth was usually lumped in with Epiphany (January 6), one of the church's earliest established feasts. Some church leaders even opposed the idea of a birth celebration. Origen (c.185-c.254) preached that it would be wrong to honor Christ in the same way Pharaoh and Herod were honored. Birthdays were for pagan gods.

Not all of Origen's contemporaries agreed that Christ's birthday shouldn't be celebrated, and some began to speculate on the date (actual records were apparently long lost). Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215) favored May 20 but noted that others had argued for April 18, April 19, and May 28. Hippolytus (c.170-c.236) championed January 2. November 17, November 20, and March 25 all had backers as well. A Latin treatise written around 243 pegged March 21, because that was believed to be the date on which God created the sun. Polycarp (c.69-c.155) had followed the same line of reasoning to conclude that Christ's birth and baptism most likely occurred on Wednesday, because the sun was created on the fourth day.

The eventual choice of December 25, made perhaps as early as 273, reflects a convergence of Origen's concern about pagan gods and the church's identification of God's son with the celestial sun. December 25 already hosted two other related festivals: natalis solis invicti (the Roman "birth of the unconquered sun"), and the birthday of Mithras, the Iranian "Sun of Righteousness" whose worship was popular with Roman soldiers. The winter solstice, another celebration of the sun, fell just a few days earlier. Seeing that pagans were already exalting deities with some parallels to the true deity, church leaders decided to commandeer the date and introduce a new festival.

Western Christians first celebrated Christmas on December 25 in 336, after Emperor Constantine had declared Christianity the empire's favored religion. Eastern churches,

•See SPIRITUALLY page 20

• PLACES OF WORSHIP ON THE PLATEAU •

Blue Valley Baptist Church

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Sunday night services every second and fourth
Sunday at 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting – 7 p.m.

Buck Creek Baptist Church

Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
First Saturday: Singing at 7:30 p.m.
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
NC 28 N. and Pine Ridge Rd., (828) 369-8329
Rai Cammack, Branch President, (828) 369-1627
Sundays: Worship – 10 a.m.; school & primary
classes – 11 a.m.; Women's & Men's Org. – noon
Tues: Women's Org. – 6:30 p.m.; Library – 6-8
p.m.
Wednesdays: Boy Scouts of America mtg. – 6:30
p.m.; Young women's activities – 6:30 p.m.

Christ Anglican Church

743-3319
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Community Bible Church in Highlands
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Clear Creek Baptist Church

Pastor Everett Wilson, (828) 743-3379
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Prayer – 6:30 p.m.
Evening Service – 7 p.m.

Community Bible Church

(Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Steven E. Kerhoulas, Pastor, 526-4685
3645 U.S. 64 east
Sundays: School – 9:30 a.m.; Worship – 10:45;
Youth "The Rock" meeting.
Tuesdays: Women's Bible Study – 9:45
Wed: Supper – 6 p.m.; Bible Study – 6:45 p.m.

Episcopal Church of the Incarnation

Rev. Brian Sullivan – 526-2968
Sundays: Choir – 9 a.m.; Adult Sunday School
classes – 9:15 a.m.; Holy Eucharist – 10:30 a.m.;
Children's Chapel – 10:30 a.m.;
Mondays: Women's Cursillo Group (Library) – 4
Tuesdays: Men's Cursillo in Jones Hall – 8
Wednesdays: Liturgy Mtg – 4 p.m.; Christian
Education – 5 p.m.; Supper & Program – 6 p.m.
Thursdays: Holy Eucharist – 10 a.m.
Sunday Service is telecast on cable channel 14

First Baptist Church

Dr. Daniel D. Robinson, 526-4153
Sun.: Worship – 8:15 a.m., 10:45 a.m., 6:30
p.m.; School – 9:30 a.m.; Youth – 6:30 p.m.;
Choir – 7:15
Wednesdays: Dinner – 5:30 p.m.; Team Kids – 6
p.m.; Prayer – 6:15 p.m.; Choir – 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

Rev. J. Hunter Coleman, Pastor, 526-3175
Sun.: Worship – 11 a.m.; School – 9:30 & 9:45.
Wednesdays: Children's Devotions – 9:30 a.m.;
Supper – 6 p.m.; Choir – 7 p.m.
Thursdays: Bible Study – 10 a.m.

Sat: Adventistas del Septimo Dia – 10 a.m. & 5

Highlands Assembly of God

Rev. Scott Holland, 524-6026, Sixth Street
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study – 7

Highlands 7th-Day Adventist Church

Wednesday evening prayer & Bible Study
Call Lloyd Kidder at 526-9474

Highlands United Methodist Church

Pastors Eddie & Kim Ingram, 526-3376
Sundays: School – 9:30 & 9:45 a.m.; Worship –
8:30 & 11 a.m.
Wednesdays: Supper – 5:30 p.m.; Bible Study &
activities – 6 p.m.

Holy Family Lutheran Church – ELCA

Rev. Delmer Chilton, Pastor,
2152 Dillard Road – 526-9741
Sundays: Worship/Communion – 10:30

Macedonia Baptist Church

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Satolah
Pastor Jamie Passmore, (706) 782-8130
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Choir – 6 p.m.

Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg. – 7 p.m.

Mountain Synagogue

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Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church

Rev. William M Evans, Priest
Parish office, 526-2418
Wednesdays & Fridays: Mass – 9 a.m.
Saturday Vigil Mass – 4 p.m.
Sundays: Mass – 11 a.m.

Scaly Mountain Baptist Church

Rev. Clifford Willis
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg. – 7 p.m.

Scaly Mountain Church of God

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Alfred Sizemore
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 10:45
a.m.; Evening Worship – 6 p.m.
Wed: Adult Bible Study & Youth – 7 p.m.
For more information call 526-3212.

Shortoff Baptist Church

Pastor Rev. Wayne Price
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Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study – 7

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Rev. Maureen Killoran (part-time)
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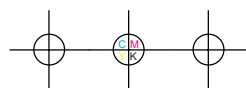
Sundays: Worship – 11 a.m.

Westside Baptist Church

Interim Pastor, Terry Dixon
Services in the basement of the Peggy Crosby
Sundays: Fellowship & Worship – 11

Whiteside Presbyterian Church

Cashiers, Rev. Sam Forrester, 743-2122
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11



The secret's out...Santa lives in Highlands!

By Nancy Welch

Contributor

Most children believe Santa Claus spends his year in the North Pole. But the children of Highlands know better. Santa lives here on our mountain.

Sure, most of the year he is disguised as Mayor Buck Trott, but once Thanksgiving rolls around, Santa begins his transformation and makes his first appearance in the town's Christmas parade.

Mayor Trott's transformation is an interesting tale, one that began, oddly enough, when he was a working pilot.

After retiring from the U.S. Air Force, Trott went to work as a corporate pilot for Coca Cola in Rome, Ga., then the largest plant in the company. He also served as assistant to the president.

"They always made sure we had something to do, so at one point a friend and I were assigned to clean out some old storage space — to do some archival work," Trott said. "In the process, we came across a lot of crated oil paintings."

The paintings, it turned out, were original Haddon Sunblum pieces done for a marketing campaign many years before.

"Coca Cola had, until then, been considered a summer drink and the company wanted to market it as a year 'round beverage," Trott said. "So they had Sunblum do a series featuring Santa Claus — for instance, reaching into a refrigerator for a Coke."

Those paintings are now known internationally. People collect trays and advertisements featuring the Coca Cola Santa.

Trott and his friend took the paintings to the president of the company. He, in turn, had them come up with a slide presentation featuring the artwork.

"I guess we had about 26 slides," he said. "We would travel around and make presentations to civic clubs, such as Rotary, Civitan and such."

He said nothing really happened at that time, but when he came to Highlands and decided to retire here, he enjoyed fishing. He noticed many of the men here had beards and told his wife, Jean, he thought he would grow a beard.

"She said, 'If you do, I'll make you a Santa Claus suit,'" Trott said.

The transformation wasn't immediate. Trott grew his beard and was then approached by several citizens to take the role of Santa.

In 1990, Trott finally took the step after being encouraged by Steve Potts.

Anita Lupoli, who owns T. J. Bailey's offered to make a spot for him in front of her store and his time as Santa began.

"I want to tell you it was cold," he said.

In the meantime, someone sent his photo to Cherry Hill Photos in Pennsylvania. The company supplies trained, bearded Santas to malls across the country, as well as other commercial appearances.

He received the call from the company in 1991 and traveled to Eatonton, N.J., to talk to children in a mall there.

"I talked to 9,996 children between the 18th of November and the 24th of December," he said.



Santa Buck Trott, with wife Jean and faithful companion, Harley.

He said one of his most memorable experiences there was when Mike Mattheny, then a rookie catcher for the Red Sox, rented the mall for a night.

"He had lost a teenage brother to cancer, so he rented the mall and brought in 45 to 50 young cancer patients. He gave them quite a night, with gifts, a dinner and a visit with Santa," Trott said. "I held each one on my knee, except the ones on stretchers."

"I sat there and I had one little bear with me when the last child was called. He was blind and he grabbed hold of that bear and wasn't about to let go and I wasn't about to tell him he couldn't have it," he said. "I still have that photo."

Trott attended Santa School in Atlanta and belongs to the Santa Claus Association. He said

it is an invaluable membership.

"They give us all kind of tips," he said.

"They tell us each year which toys will be most popular."

But that's not the only way he knows. While in New Jersey, he and others stayed in a motel nearby that had a hot tub. Each night, the Santas would change and go to the tub to relax. At times, a representative of Toys'R'Us would meet them there and keep them posted on popular toys and inventory shortages.

"One year everyone wanted Power Rangers and they ran out, so the representative came and told us and asked us to suggest Transformers instead," he said. The children responded well and crisis was averted.

He has many tricks of the trade. For instance, when he enters a room of very young children, he does so calmly, asking everyone to "give me five."

"That seems to bring them all together and they don't get frightened," Trott said. "But if one cries, they all will. It never fails. And there's nothing you can do."

One question Santa always asks the children is if they know the real reason for the season.

"Some say snow or toys, but a surprising number will tell you it is the Baby Jesus' birthday," he said. "You know, you can't do that in commercial malls. That's why I don't do them anymore. There are too many restrictions."

Over the course of 15 years, he said he has had probably 10,000 sit on his knee, including the members of the Rutgers Football Team.

Doesn't his knee wear out?

"No," he said, his eyes twinkling. "People don't realize if you have your leg at a 45 degree angle, you can bear quite a lot of weight."

What are children asking for this year?

"The boys still want Power Rangers and Transformers," he said. "The girls want princess dolls and Cabbage Patch Dolls, but Barbie Dolls still seem to top the lists."

He said when children ask for skate boards, sleds, snow boards, skis or bicycles he has a requirement.

"I tell them if they are going to get something like that, they must have a helmet," he said.

Needless to say, this is a very busy time of year for Santa as he visits pre-schools, church groups and waits downtown on Saturdays to hear from good little boys and girls.

"My biggest problem now is that people want me to come to their houses. I go to a few, but my time is very limited," he said.

Will he ever retire?

"As mayor, yes. This is my last term," he said. "But I'm not so sure about Santa Claus."

– News from Chambéry, France, part 5 –

Christmas in my wonderful Chambéry

By Megan Lewicki

Rotary Exchange Student

Lights are hanging everywhere for Christmas time. The Elephants at Chambéry's prized fountain look regal wearing a string of lights for tiaras.

Little cottages surrounding Chambéry's center have been built for the highly anticipated *Marché du Noël* — a craft show for local artisans — where children come from all over the town to visit Père Noël, eat sugar crêpes, and beg their parents for little trinkets that catch their eye.

The only thing I cannot get used to is the size of the Christmas trees. It looks like the French are trying to decorate stumped bushes. I miss going with my sister and father to pick out our six-foot (or more), plump tree, watching my dad cut it down, then helping him drag it to the truck. There is nothing more gratifying.

This year I will do without egg nog. This might actually be a good thing, as I tend to drink too much of it and then complain of a stomach ache for hours. Now that I think of it, it's almost a tradition that my family and I go through every year. I've asked the French who have been to the states if

they've ever tried egg nog and liked it. So far I've received the same reply, "Oh, it's disgusting!" This of course leaves me dumbfounded.

The Christmas spirit is definitely noticeable at my lycée. Almost every student is seen wearing a Santa hat. But it doesn't stop at the hat; I spotted someone wearing an elf costume and then saw Santa himself waiting in the lunch line. I had half a mind to run up to him, jump on his lap, and beg for some egg nog. But of course I controlled myself.

I must say that I am a very lucky exchange student. My family is coming for Christmas. This is ordinarily not allowed for Rotary exchange students (it is said to be more difficult for the student), but they are coming anyway and I couldn't be happier. I can't wait to show them all my favorite local cafés and side streets that the typical tourist would be oblivious to. After a few days in Chambéry, we'll then go to Paris and spend a few nights there. I'm anticipating the combination of my sister and Paris — the fashion addicted shopaholic's dream world. Whatever the outcome, it should be pretty comical. My French isn't perfect, but I'll enjoy translating

what I know for my family.

So far I haven't noticed any mistletoe hanging above any doors, and I wonder if the French even have that custom here. I'll be on the look out for it though...

I can see snow on the mountain peaks that surround Chambéry and it leaves me hoping for a "white Christmas." These first few months have been the hardest, not only because of

the difficulty learning the language but the holidays as well; three American exchange students have already returned or are making plans to return home. I won't be coming home any time soon, though, so I bid you Happy Holidays from France!

***Fun Fact #5: In typical French homes the toilet and the shower or tub are not in the same room.**



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Mountain Architecture 17




Chestnut Hill's new assisted living center on schedule

The long-awaited Assisted Living Center at Chestnut Hill of Highlands, a premier residential retirement community in Highlands is now more than a skeleton. Walls and a roof have been erected over the steel beams that sat on the property for several years while the development went through some financially trying times. Now the future of the community is bright.

The 26-bed assisted living center known as The Suites will be the first such licensed facility in the Highlands-Cashiers area. Completion is scheduled for early summer 2005.

"Chestnut Hill residents will finally have the continuum of care that will provide them the peace of mind they deserve," said Mac MacDonald, sales and marketing director. "They will be able to stay in the community where they have lived among friends and familiar surroundings if there ever is a need to transition from their independent residences to the Assisted Living Center. Beyond that," MacDonald added, "if they need skilled nursing, they can move to the Fidelia Eckerd Center at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, which is just next door."

MacDonald said that a road is planned for Phase II of the development to connect Chestnut Hill directly to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital to make medical care more easily accessible to residents.

The assisted living center will include certified staff, housekeeping, transportation, an emergency call system, and various social, educational, religious, and cultural programs for residents.

Perry Bartsch, Jr. Construction Company of Asheville, N.C., is the project's contractor. Chestnut Hill of Highlands Properties, LLC, is the new owner of the community. The Steven D. Bell Company of Greensboro, N.C., is the majority partner, while Banyan Senior Living of Greenville, S.C., is the operation's manager and shares in the ownership, as well. Both companies have long histories in the senior living industry.

For more information on Chestnut Hill of Highlands or to tour the model home, call 787-2114 or toll-free at 888-473-5093.



● HOLIDAY RECIPES ●

Buche de Noel

(Classic French Christmas Dessert)

By Debra F. Weber and
Sabrina Cashion

The origins of this most famous and delicious of French pastries can be traced back to the ancient Celtic tradition of celebrating the winter solstice. On this day, the shortest of the year, the Celts would search for a large trunk of either oak, beech, elm or cherry and would burn it. The burning log was a symbol of the rebirth of the sun as well as an offering of thanks to the sun for returning to the earth.

This pagan tradition was not snuffed out by the Catholic church and during the middle ages the logs and the ceremony of the burning log became more elaborate. The logs themselves would be decorated with ribbons and greenery. Then the youngest and the oldest member of each family would carry the log to the hearth and set it ablaze. It would burn through the night and the ashes would be collected the next day to be used during the year.

They were thought to help cure various sicknesses and protect the house from storms, lightening and the evil powers of the Devil.

The tradition of actually burning the log began to disappear with the arrival of small stoves and the disappearance of large hearths. The big log was replaced by a smaller branch that was set in the middle of the table and surrounded by little "friandises" (sweets, delicacies) that were given as treats to guests. It is this branch that was eventually transformed into the cake we know as the Bûche de Noël. Whether it was a Parisienne or Lyonnaise creation is still the subject of a heated debate. It is first mentioned and described in 1879 and since that time it has become "THE" dessert served at Christmas dinners in France.

Recipe

1 cup sifted cake flour
1/4 cup cocoa
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup cold brewed coffee
1 teaspoon vanilla

Line jelly-roll pan with waxed paper and grease. Sift flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt together in a small bowl; set aside. In separate bowl beat eggs until thick and creamy. Gradually add sugar, beating constantly until mixture is very thick. Stir in coffee and vanilla. Fold in flour mixture. Spread batter evenly in pan. Bake at 375 degrees for 12 minutes.

Sprinkle kitchen towel with powdered sugar, invert cake onto towel, remove waxed paper and roll cake and towel jelly roll fashion. Cool. When cake has cooled unroll, spread with filling, reroll.

Filling

1 1/2 cups heavy cream

2 teaspoons instant coffee
1/2 cup powdered sugar

Beat cream until stiff. Add instant coffee and powdered sugar.

Frosting

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1/4 cup strong coffee
1 cup butter
3/4 cup light corn syrup
4 egg yolks
Melt chocolate chips with coffee over hot, not boiling water. Cool. Beat butter in small bowl until light and fluffy. Beat corn syrup and egg yolks into butter. Stir in cooled chocolate mixture.

Note:

This is a very good recipe for a vertical layer cake. After the cake has cooled cut it into 3 3-1/2" wide strips. Fill then roll in one continuous strip, turn sideways so you have a 3-1/2" high cake. Frost as usual. This looks like a regular 2 layer cake until you cut into it.



... BOOK REVIEW continued from page 7

unimportant lie, pride, a neglected opportunity—cut [one] off from grace more completely than the worst sins of all. Then, in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone: now, in his corruption, he had learnt..." (p. 130-1) What he had learned was a deep "irrational" love for everyone.

At the end of the novel Padre Jose makes a profound statement at the moment of his death (I won't tell you how that came about) that has stayed with me since the first time I read this book: "It seemed to him at that moment that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that there was only one thing that counted—to be a saint." (p 200) How many times do I look back at my behavior during a day and think how easy it would have been to have had just a little more patience and not gotten irritated with a particular person? We all think that it takes someone extraordinary to be a saint, but I think that what Mr. Greene says here is very true about all of us: sainthood is within our grasp with just a little self-restraint and a little courage.

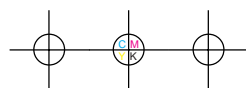
The Quiet American, published in 1955, is a novel very relevant to

America today. It is set in Saigon during the Vietnam War in the mid 1950s, when it was still France's war. An experienced and jaded English reporter, Fowler, meets a young American, Pyle, who has just arrived. It quickly becomes evident that Pyle works for the CIA. Pyle is extremely idealistic and earnest about his ideals, and he is very concerned about Democracy, always with a capital D. Pyle wants to do good: "[Pyle] was absorbed already in the dilemmas of Democracy and the responsibilities of the West: he was determined—I learnt that very soon—to do good, not to any individual person but to a country, a continent, a world." Fowler argues that the Vietnamese want to eat and live their lives and not be shot at, that they don't care about ideas like Communism and Democracy.

The story gets complicated when Pyle falls in love with Fowler's Vietnamese girlfriend, but the story is really an argument between a simplistic idealist and a cynic with a more realistic view of the world.

We are in Iraq today (we were finally told after the WMDs didn't appear) for the cause of Democracy, also with a capital D. We are there to remove an awful tyrant and bring the blessings of liberty to the Iraqi people. What a great rationale because who could possibly argue

■ See BOOK REVIEW page 21





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• ARMCHAIR TRAVELER •

The Christmas Markets of Germany

By Phyllis Picklesimer

Contributor

Christmas has always been a special time at my house. I collect dolls and ornaments from all over the world and hang them all on my Christmas tree in a great conglomeration that somehow seems to work.

I had long desired a visit to the Christmas Markets (Christkindl or Christ Child Markets) of Germany. On November 27, I turned my back on my Christmas preparations and embarked on a cruise on the Rhine and Main Rivers of Germany with visits to their famous towns and Christmas Markets on the way.

The Markets are a centuries-old tradition, which begin at Advent each year. In the beginning, they served as an event to brighten the long, dark days of winter. They were also usually held in the squares around the main cathedrals and churches as a means of attracting people to the services. Today they have grown into a collection of booths selling the foods of the region, to eat there or to take home, and the handicrafts that are made in Germany.

Cologne was the first stop and Christmas Market. The area around the huge Gothic cathedral was bustling with people. Everyone was eating wursts and drinking the Glug, or mulled, wine often in special cups shaped like boots. For an introduction, it was certainly full of festivity with its crowds full of smiles and conversation as they wandered the aisles of the stalls.

Between visits to the towns, we would float past decorated houses and Christmas trees, quaint towns with their medieval Rathauses, churches and their steeples, or fog-shrouded trees along the banks of the rivers.

After a cruise through the Rhine Gorge with its castles and Lorelei Rock of legend, we arrived in the small town of Rudesheim for a tour of Siegfried's Music Museum with its hundreds of unique music boxes. A very picturesque town, it was doubly so as we walked through its narrow, Christmas tree-lined Drosselgasse to return to the boat.

Our visit to Heidelberg included a visit to its brooding castle above the town, a walk through its Old Town, and, of course, a stroll through its Christmas Markets with lunch at a booth featuring its famous wursts. The shop windows also vied for our attention with their seasonal decorations.

Our journey then progressed to the Main River and its slower current and meandering

course. The Rhine of the previous days had much river traffic with its many barges carrying all kinds of goods on this river "highway." On the Main, river traffic is less and the pace is much slower.

A tour of Wurzburg's Prince Bishop's Baroque Residenz and a later ramble through its Old Town, overlooked by its Marienberg fortress, ended in its also Baroque and elaborate Christmas Market. In its crisp evening air, we were convinced that Christmas was truly at hand.



The next day saw us at one of the high points of the trip. After a bus ride through the countryside of Bavaria, we arrived in Rothenburg ob der Tauber. A particular favorite of mine (I have stayed in its charming Burg Hotel four times.), Rothenburg could be a Hollywood stage set of a perfectly bewitching German village at Christmastime with its half-timbered building and ornate Rathaus.

While enjoying its large decorated and lighted tree in the main square and greenery draped fountains, it was hard not to hum "It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas" while strolling through its many Christmas booths. Not to be missed is its Kathy

Wohlfahrt Christmas Shop. Even though she has branched out into many of Germany's other towns, and even to several others in Rothenburg, the flagship store is an unbelievable array of Christmas trees, nutcrackers, ornaments of glass and wood, linens, and anything else you might consider necessary for making your Christmas merry.

Bamberg, with its very old and ornately painted half-timbered Rathaus was also decorated as festively as the other towns and cities of our visit. In all the Christmas Markets, there is a bustle of citizens and tourists all enjoying the fellowship of the season.

While on the Main River, our boat passed through many locks and low bridges, which necessitated the lowering of the wheelhouse and removal of the side rails on the upper deck. From Bamberg, travel to Nuremberg is by way of the Main-Danube Canal with its sometimes amazingly deep locks.

Nuremberg is Germany's most famous Christmas Market. There is proof that its Christmas Market dates to at least 1628. It attracts about two million visitors a year. Our Saturday visit brought the realization that many thousands of those visitors were visiting with us. There are rides in its historic mail coach for everyone and a separate children's area with many carnival rides and flashing lights. There is even an International Christmas Market area with booths supplied and manned by its sister cities, one of which is Atlanta.

Everyone was eating -- all the restaurants are also full -- drinking, and walking the streets and aisles between the stalls in numbers that gave new meaning to "teeming with people." The Markets are located in this walled city's Old Town. Information provided by the city tells that there are 190 booths this year and that the Market is famous for its prune men, Nuremberg Rostbratwursts, Lebkuchen (gingerbread), and its Nuremberg mulled wine. We attempted to sample it all!

As night fell, we returned to our boat and our farewell dinner. It was hard to believe that it was all over. There will be no Christmas Markets to be explored the following day, no medieval towns or castles to be toured, and no festive dinners with our fellow passengers. Our experience has been delightful and a vow to return to sample other rivers and Christmas Markets allowed us to head homeward with thoughts of our own holiday celebrations as compensation.



• UPCOMING EVENTS •

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On-going

- At the Bascom-Louise Gallery – The Element of Collage is now on exhibit in the gallery. The exhibits are free and open to the public.

- At the Bascom-Louise Gallery – Education New – Open Studio with a Live Model 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the gallery. All participants bring your choice of art medium and \$10 to pay for the model and facilitator. This class is for artists 18 yrs. and older or under 18 with written parent permission. Join us for this exciting new class!

- Al-Anon Group meets at noon on Thursdays in the Community Room at First Presbyterian Church.

- At ...on the Verandah on Lake Sequoyah, Dinner and piano entertainment from 6 p.m. Dec. 26-31.

- The Mountain View group of Alcoholics Anonymous meets in the remodeled basement room of the Presbyterian Church sanctuary, in Highlands Mondays at 8 p.m.; Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m. (women only); Wed and Fri at noon.

- The holidays at Highlands Wine & Cheese – Wine Flights Friday and Saturday: 4:30-6:30. Closed Christmas Day. Open New Year's Day. Holiday Sale in progress. As always, Wines by the glass and cheese plates available Wednesday through Saturday: 1:30 until 4:30. Complimentary Tastings Saturday: 1 until 4:30.

Dec. 21

- Greening of the Episcopal Church at 9:30 a.m.

Dec. 24

- Come Celebrate the Warmth of Christmas with a Christmas Eve Candlelight service: Including a Christmas Narrative and Musical Christmas Specials at Community Bible Church, December 24th at 7 p.m.. Call for more information 526-4685.

- Christmas Eve Service at Highlands United Methodist Church at 5:30 p.m. It will be a family-friendly, communion and candlelight service. All are invited! The church is located at 315 Main Street.

- Carols and visits from St. Nick, 4:30 p.m. at the Episcopal Church.

- Family Eucharist Service at the Episcopal Church.

- All Macon County Landfills and Convenience Centers will be closed.

Reopen, Monday, Dec. 27.

Dec. 25

- Christmas Dinner at Main Street Inn sponsored by the Highlands Innkeepers Assn. to benefit Habitat for Humanity. For reservations, call 526-2590.

- Carols and Holy Eucharist at 11 p.m. at the Episcopal Church.

- Macon County Landfills and Convenience Centers will be closed. Reopen, Monday, Dec. 27.

Jan 4

- "WE'RE MOVING to a new location & a new night! The 'High Mountain Squares' square-dance club will dance TUESDAYS at the MACON MIDDLE SCHOOL on Wells Grove Rd., Franklin, starting Tuesday, Jan. 4, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Info: 828-349-0905/828-524-4955/706-782-9846. email. eztoo@dnet.net//earledw@dnet.net

Jan. 6

- "The High Mountains Squares will sponsor a SQUARE DANCE 'BEGINNERS' CLASS starting at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 6, at the Macon Environmental Resource Center on Lakeside Drive next to the Macon County landfill. Anyone from age 10 & up are invited to learn to square-dance & put some good, clean fun in his/her life. For information: 828-349-3908//828-349-0905//706-782-9846.

- GED classes taught in Spanish to start at the Literacy Council of Highlands at the Peggy Crosby Center at 5 p.m. and every Thursday there after through April. For more information, call Breta Stroud at 526-9938, ext. 240.

Jan. 8

- HOME VG B-Ball at the Rec Park at 3 p.m.



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SOAR race set for June 25

The new year is soon upon us and the Special Olympics Adventure Race committee is busy planning for 2005.

There will be another spectacular auction and race, which will be the third annual event. The dates are June 23 for the auction and June 25 for the races.

This year there will be two races – a spirit race and an adventure race.

As the war escalates and more of our forces are losing their lives everyday, it is important to do all we can do for our troops and their families. The loss of so many lives leaves many children without a parent and many of our forces are in the beginning of their young adult lives.

The Special Operations Warrior Foundation is there for the children of the Special Operations soldiers of all branches of the service, who have lost their life in the line of duty.

Special Operations personnel have suffered casualties at over 15 times the rate of conventional forces. Today, over 500 children exist who should not be denied the education their fallen parent would have wanted for them. Our Special Operations personnel are grateful for the help and the knowledge that their children will be taken care of.

The Special Operations Adventure Race committee calls on you to consider putting this charity on your list of donations for 2005. Many Highlanders and Highlands merchants have been great supporters and we are very grateful for their donations.

The race committee members work all year and are dedicated to this cause. We hope you will make it your cause, too.

All interested volunteers can call Nancy Horwitz at 526-0224.



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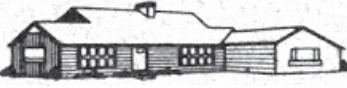


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... SPIRITUALLY from page 11

however, held on to January 6 as the date for Christ's birth and his baptism. Most easterners eventually adopted December 25, celebrating Christ's birth on the earlier date and his baptism on the latter, but the Armenian church celebrates his birth on January 6. Incidentally, the Western church does celebrate Epiphany on January 6, but as the arrival date of the Magi rather than as the date of Christ's baptism.

Another wrinkle was added in the sixteenth century when Pope Gregory devised a new calendar, which was unevenly adopted. The Eastern Orthodox and some Protestants retained the Julian calendar, which meant they celebrated Christmas 13 days later than their Gregorian counterparts. Most—but not all—of the Christian world now agrees on the Gregorian calendar and the December 25 date.

The pagan origins of the Christmas date, as well as pagan origins for many Christmas customs (gift-giving and merrymaking from Roman Saturnalia; greenery, lights, and charity from the Roman New Year; Yule logs and various foods from Teutonic feasts), have always fueled arguments against the holiday. "It's just paganism wrapped with a Christian bow," naysayers argue. But while kowtowing to worldliness must always be a concern for Christians, the church has generally viewed efforts to reshape culture—including holidays—positively. As a theologian asserted in 320, "We hold this day holy, not like the pagans because of the birth of the sun, but because of him who made it.

Elesha can be reached at
cheditor@ChristianityToday.com.

Recycling centers close for holiday

The Macon County Landfills and Convenience Centers will close on Friday, Dec. 24 at 2 p.m. All facilities will also be closed on Christmas Day, Dec. 25. Convenience Centers will re-open for regular business hours on Sunday and all facilities will be open Monday, Dec. 27.

A large amount of waste will be generated over the holiday but the public is asked to wait until Monday before using the Convenience Centers because the landfills will not be open to service the Convenience Centers with empty containers.

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... WATER from page 1

"We need to understand water availability outside the town limits of Highlands," said Commissioner Allan Bryson. "Do we have enough water to supply future growth?"

To that end, a \$44,500 grant has been secured through the Rural Center, with \$4,500 of that a local county match.

County Manger Sam Greenwood said the water system consolidation will focus on the needs of the three country clubs outside the town limits — Highlands Falls Country Club, The Cullasaja Country Club and Wildcat Cliffs Country Club — as well as future growth in the area.

"It's all about water availability," he said. "And protecting it."

The project will evaluate the options for uniting the various water supply systems under a single organizational structure and examine the economic costs and benefits of this reorganization.

Greenwood said the fact that a study is taking place doesn't mean consolidation will happen. The study is expected to be completed sometime this spring.

... BOOK REVIEW continued from page 15

against such noble motives?

Most Iraqis were initially grateful to the U.S. for getting rid of Saddam, but the fact that the basic conditions of life are now in many ways worse than they had been under Saddam—lack of electricity, underemployment, etc.—has turned large numbers of people against us. Liberty is wonderful but if you are starving or afraid to leave your house it is hard to appreciate.

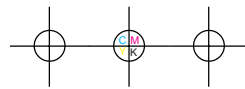
The Quiet American is also interesting as a historical document: it contains all the warning that anyone could have needed to tell the U.S. to stay out of Vietnam. France was losing for the same reasons that we eventually lost. But there was no warning strong enough to keep us out because we had such Noble Ideals. In order to save the Vietnamese from Communism we had to kill them.

After such serious books it is a delight to turn to Travels with My Aunt, published in 1969. Henry Pulling is a bank manager who has led an extremely quiet and sedate

existence. A couple of years after he retired his mother died, and his Aunt Augusta, who he had never met, showed up for the funeral. Aunt Augusta was a fun-loving octogenarian who loved to travel. She quickly drew Henry into her orbit and they were soon on the road. I'm not going to tell you any more about this book because it's got some fun surprises—you'll just have to read it for yourself!

This book is a lighthearted romp with the delightful message that life is to be lived to the full, that taking risks and trying new experiences are the best part of life, and that anyone at any age can begin to do this.

Perhaps this novel shows how Mr. Greene resolved his spiritual quandaries: stop worrying about the future life and live this present life. Certainly in the thirty years that these three books span Mr. Greene seems to have developed a much happier outlook on life and a more upbeat opinion of the human race.



MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Here's to a prosperous, healthy and joyous 2005 for all!

Highlands' Newspaper is published 51 weeks a year.

The next edition will be Friday Jan. 7, 2005.

Thank you Highlands, for all your support!

— Publisher/Editor — Kim Lewicki

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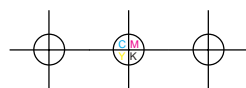
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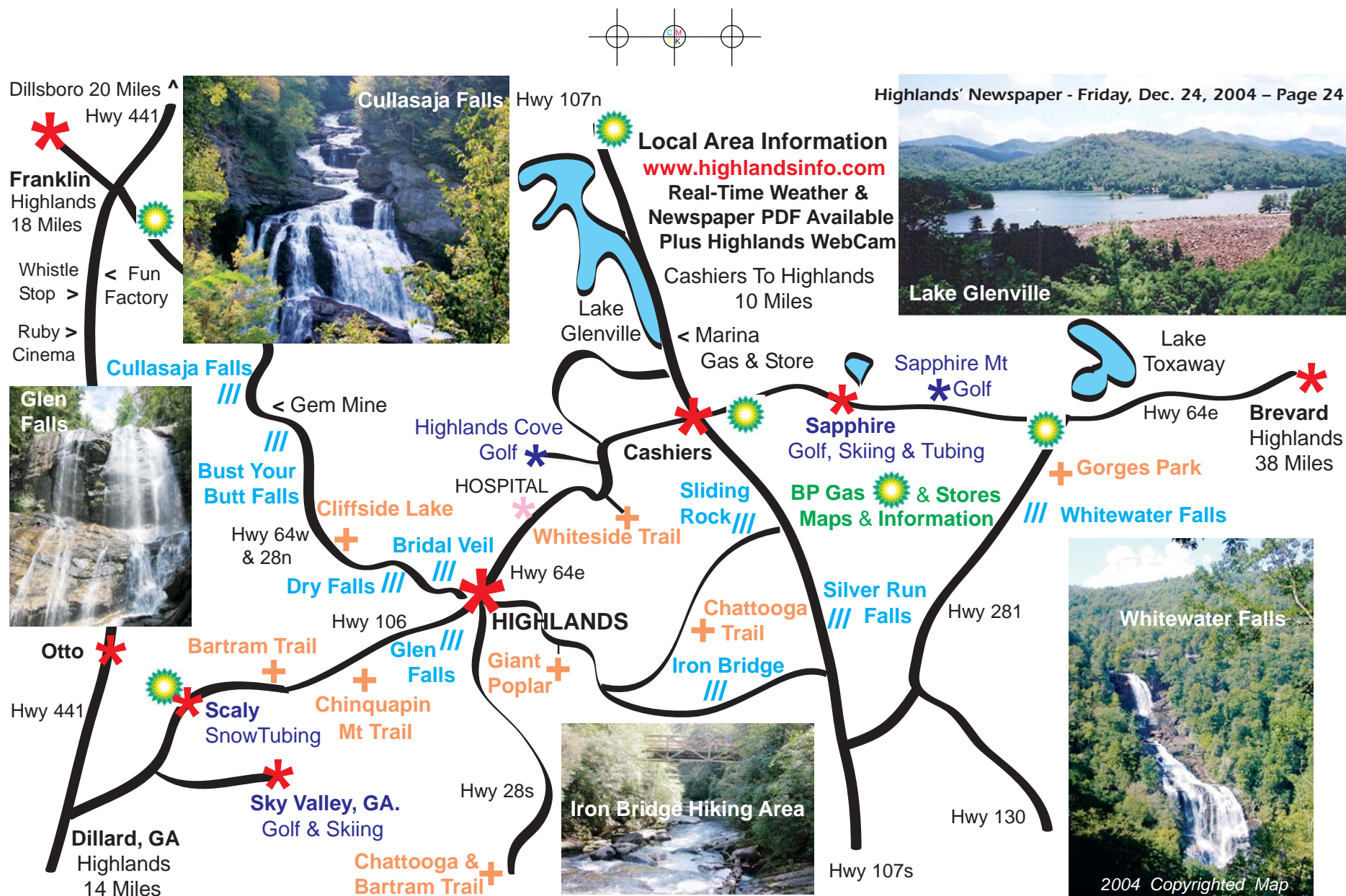
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