

Opinion

A community forum for viewpoints from around the world to your backyard

The Clinch County News

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TALL TALES

By Lem Griffis

A game warden caught a man with a deer tied across the hood of his car during the closed season. But the man had no trouble explaining to the warden that it was a plain mistake. That he thought the deer was a pedestrian.

A tough mug was being sworn as a witness in court. He was asked, do you promise to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God? He said, why not, I will try anything once.

The greatest problem of the politicians in Washington seems to be how to raise enough taxes to keep the war and big society programs going, and still keep the voters. About the only chance they have is to keep the prices of food going up. By the time election gets here the voters will be too weak to get to the polls to vote.

Truthfully yours,
Lem Griffis

Our letters to the editor are intended to be a free and open forum for local and area citizens to comment on items of general public interest. If you wish to write a letter to us, please type it or write legibly, double-spacing preferred. Letters are subject to editing for length, good taste and newspaper style. Subjects of a personal nature are generally not acceptable. Endorsements of political candidates are also not acceptable during a campaign. All letters must be signed but names may be withheld under certain dire circumstances. Please include a daytime phone number and address. You can also e-mail us a letter at clinnews@windstream.net, or visit our website at www.theclinchcountynews.com.

The joy of an unexpected state championship

I'm ashamed to admit it, but I didn't see it coming.

When this high school basketball season started, I didn't really think about the Clinch County Panthers contending for a state championship. I knew they would be very good. Heck, they were 22-3 last year, and won 19 games the year before that. But I wasn't counting on a trip to Macon in March.

Well, that's what we got, and I am elated that my vision was so blurry.

How did the 2026 CCHS basketball team – a group with just one senior – do it? Here are some factors:

• **This team learned from their losses.**

Terrence George's Panthers lost just three times this season – to Turner County twice, and to Class AAAAA's Coffee, but they came back and avenged those losses later in the season. After Clinch lost at Coffee, 69-51, on January 6, George challenged his team to be more physical the next go-round. They were, winning by 14, 61-47, against Coffee at home on January 24.

That happened throughout the season – the Panthers would have a hard time handling the press or shooting free throws, react to it, work on it, and get better. George and his staff would focus on those issues during practice, and those "weaknesses"

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would be shored up for the next game.

• **This team was young, but not inexperienced.**

Most of the key components of this team played a lot last year. And this core group has been playing together for years – in recreation ball, AAU, and in middle school. Those coaches who dedicated their time to this group when they were young (James Edwards and Duron Morris among them) deserve a lot of credit for the development of these players. That experience of playing against top-notch AAU competition made these Panthers battle-tested and cool under pressure.

• **This team knew their roles.**

The 2025-2026 Panthers had a three-headed monster like none we've ever seen in Clinch County High hoops history with Traviian Miller, Kamaron Johnson, and Jakyri Posley. All three are capable of taking over a game offensively, and it's a nightmare for other teams to "pick their poison" on how to defend them. But just as important are that the other players are doing

their jobs, and know their roles – and Shane Burns, Kyiis Mingo, Fred Causey, DeMarco Simon, and the other Panthers certainly do.

If you don't have these guys doing the "dirty work" – taking charges, grabbing key rebounds, setting picks – you don't win a title, and not many games either.

• **This team has coaching karma.**

Terrence George coached has all three of my children, and I have great respect for him as a man and role model for our children.

Coach George demands accountability from his players, and that has probably cost him some victories over the years, as he would sit players who didn't meet his standards for academics or behavior. Didn't matter if it was the star player or the last guy on the bench, Coach George was steady and fair and his concern was more about building responsible young people than winning games.

So, when he sticks to his guns, does everything the right way, and *still* wins games, it brings me great joy. My father was the last

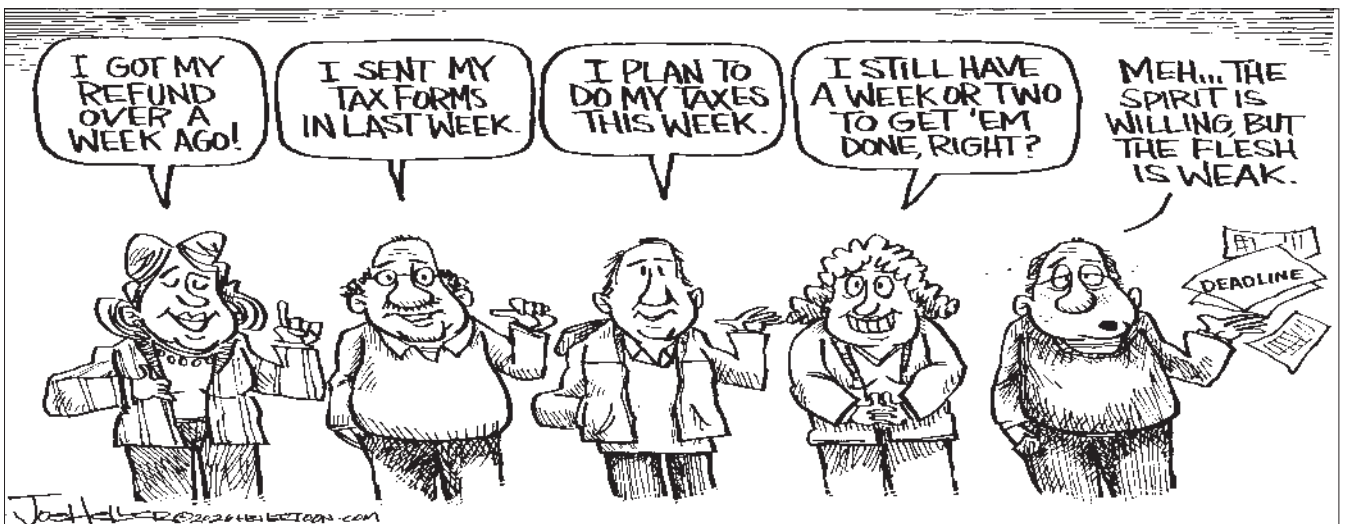
coach to win a state title at CCHS (in 1989) and I know he would be thrilled that Coach George, whom he coached, steered the Panthers to another state crown. Coach George is a great basketball coach, but an even better human being.

The joy of the good news of the first boys basketball state championship in 37 years for Clinch County came with some horribly bad news. Around halftime of the game, word started to filter through Macon Coliseum that CCHS senior Jonah Pittman had passed away that morning after an ATV accident the previous day.

Jonah was a leader of the CCHS student section, and that section was decimated by the news of his unexpected passing Thursday in Macon. Our deepest condolences go out to Jonah's family and friends who are dealing with this tragedy.

Jonah's father, Blake, worked with us at the newspaper for over a decade, and died less than two years ago from heart failure. We miss him every day. Blake and Jonah were two of the most rabid Panther fans on the planet. I take some solace in knowing they were reunited for Thursday's state championship win – with the best seats in the house.

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Manhood

Editor's Note: This essay is an excerpt from local author Roy Rhodes's new book "Half Wit-Half Wisdom," available on Amazon.com. The News will publish excerpts from the book for the next few weeks.

There's nothing like a fishing trip with the guys to straighten out a man's perspective on life. Most women don't understand the motivation, the psychology underlying a man's need to leave hearth and home for a week-end at a fish camp. They don't understand this yearning to scratch when and where it itches, to talk rudely to other humans, and to belch free of the bonds of polite society. Break free. I meant break free.

Men can't understand why women don't understand the necessity of such occasional week-ends. But the male's need for week-end or week-long fishing trips is not something that can be explained face-to-face or in an article in a magazine or book. It's a thing of the blood. It is born into the male of the species just as surely as

the survival instinct, the desire for acceptance by others, or the need for a hot car when you're fifteen.

I pondered such weighty matters several times over the years in the Okefenokee Swamp with two fishing buddies. For the sake of their reputations, I will leave them nameless, but these two jokers agreed with me that women are incapable of understanding the merits of a good fishing trip. Right, David? Right, Joel?

"It's fun," David said. "No need to get philosophical about it. Fishing with the boys is just lots of good, clean fun." He jerked the tip of his rod several times, trying to get his hook out of some submerged stump. I had to agree with him.

"Yeah," Joel said. "And it's healthy. Here we are in the air and sunshine while our wives are cooped up in the house with a bunch of kids. Now, who is the smarter, men or women?" We all reflected on the wisdom of that statement, took another puff from our cigars, and watched the alligators circle the boat.

Roy Rhodes

GUEST COLUMNIST



I noticed with three of us in one boat, a hand placed on the side of the craft was awfully close to the waterline. David cast his line toward the bank, deftly hooking a bush. It was only inches from being a great cast.

"Yeah," I said. "Being out like this gives a man a sense of freedom." I turned to crank the motor, stepped on a rod, kicked the can at my feet, and came with inches of hitting David in the back when I pulled the cord to start us up. Before I could get the motor started, Joel had caught a fish. This one was almost big enough to keep, so he did. Just as the motor fired up, David hooked a cypress.

That's not the way the entire trip went. I eventually stopped turning over and stepping on everything within a two-foot radius. David did not constantly snag his hook on every tree, bush, stump, or log that

we passed. Joel did catch some creatures of a size sufficient to be worthy of the name, fish. We all did.

These are not bald-faced lies. We did cook some fish and eat them that night. We were at a fish camp along the Suwannee River. We were having fun. We were macho. We may or may not have left a day or two earlier than we originally intended, so that we could avoid sleeping on the cold, hard ground. I do not recall.

But I'll tell you what I do remember, now that my memory has been jogged by an outing with the guys. I do recall this quote by a famous person, which makes me think I was a little hasty in another article, bragging about how tough women are.

"Childbirth doesn't hurt as bad as women let on. It just looks bad." John Wayne was always a profound thinker to my notion.

