



N.C. bill could dump backroad upkeep on counties

By David Joy
Staff Writer

Jackson County Manager Kenneth Westmoreland was the guest speaker at the weekly Rotary Club meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 4. Westmoreland hit highlights of issues concerning the Cashiers area and also mentioned a senate bill that could respectively put the responsibility of secondary road management on the county.

"There's discussion going on in the general assembly that would in fact transfer all secondary roads to county management," Westmoreland explained. "Several years ago there was just minor conversations, but now it's beginning to be more pronounced."

The bill Westmoreland is discussing is senate bill 758, titled "Transfer Secondary Roads to Counties." The sponsors of this bill were two senators from Mecklenburg County districts, democrat Daniel G. Clodfelter and republican Bob Rucho.

Senate bill 758, if passed, would be "an act to remove the secondary roads from the state highway system and to transfer the responsibility for construction and maintenance of secondary roads to counties."

Westmoreland went on to say, "There was considerable concern by county officials at the last state meeting held in Hickory that this would become a reality."

David Thompson, the

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Ultimate veteran

Cahill is testament to courage, dedication and volunteerism

By David Joy
Staff Writer

Few people, if any, could list two tours in Vietnam, eight competitions in the Iron Man triathlon, Marine Colonel, Navy War College graduate, and dental hygienist as bullets on their resume. Yet, these are just a few of the milestones and accolades in the borderline unbelievable life of Laurel Falls resident Robert Cahill.

Born into a military family with his father and brother both being Air Force officers, Cahill started his 27-year Marine Corps career in 1968. During the height of a controversial conflict in Vietnam with thousands of Americans being drafted, Cahill heard the call and volunteered to serve.

"A lot of my friends were getting drafted left and right," Cahill explained. "I had a choice, but I didn't have a choice; I probably would have been drafted."

After receiving training in combat engineering, which, due to the Vietnam War, emphasized road sweeps, land mine warfare, and demolitions, Cahill headed to Vietnam in 1969.

His first assignment was



Cahill

to rebuild a combat outpost overlooking the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and after the build Cahill received the assignment that brought him clarity of purpose.

Cahill had been called to an infantry battalion and on the first day of assignment decided to follow his platoon on a night ambush sweep. Green to the area, Cahill did not know the radio frequencies and had yet to even meet the battalion commander he was supporting, but he went.

The infantry had taken off in front, and as Cahill played catch up he heard

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Photos submitted

Robert Cahill kneels in front of grenades and mines in Vietnam as a combat engineer.

Legasus, golf community foreclosures run rampant

By David Joy
Staff Writer

A slowly recovering economy has meant disaster for high-end golf communities across western North Carolina.

Seven Falls Golf and River Club in Etowah filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Oct. 26, the Balsam Mountain Preserve in Jackson County recently lost control and custody of its development, and Legasus continues to crumble under ongoing foreclosure filings.

As the economy collapsed throughout 2008, liens on Legasus debts began to pile up in the Jackson County clerk's office. Though liens filed on large developments are not uncommon, the economy's slow recovery has led to ongoing foreclosure filings in 2009.

Legasus Properties has had 13 foreclosures filed thus far in 2009, the largest of which totaled \$11,882,316.67. The total foreclosure values for the 13 filings in 2009 are upwards of \$36.1 million. However, Ted Morlok, one of the principals of Legasus, does not expect many of these filings to go through.

"Only three parcels within River Rock have been foreclosed totaling \$3.2 million," Morlok said. "While there are other parcels that are in the process, we are hopeful to be able to avoid any further foreclosure sales."

The two other high-end golf developments have also suffered greatly, with Seven Falls foreclosures totaling \$15.7 million and Balsam Preserve foreclosures totaling \$21 million. In comparison, the Trillium devel-

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From left, Robert Cahill presents Ellsworth Bunker, the American ambassador of Vietnam, the last flag flown in times of war and peace at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon.

Glenville resident excels racing boats

Alan climbing to top of standings in only second year

By Kelly Donaldson
Editor

David Alan of Glenville likes excitement. When he could no longer satisfy his need for thrills through fighting fires as a Florida fire chief, he turned his attention to drag boat racing.

Now after only about two

years of competing, he's at the top of the standings and hungry for more success in the future.

"I kind of needed some adrenalin after being a fire chief and jumping out of helicopters," said Alan. "Last year, I ended up world runner-up, and that was my first year in the Outboard Drag Boat Association (ODBA). I race with a couple of different associations."

Recently, all of the organizations came together for a "best of the best" competi-

tion in Jasper, Tenn., where Alan placed third.

"I would have finished second, but I forgot to turn my computer on and my boat is driven by computer," said Alan, who was first in points.

Alan's first year of competition produced a point total of 98.5. This year, he has 105 points.

"I've made some improvements," said Alan. "Next year, as statistics

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Photo by Kelly Donaldson/Staff

Above, Glenville's David Alan and his dog stand next to the boat he races in the Outboard Drag Boat Association.

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Final Cashiers Outside looks at Blue Ridge Parkway's 75th anniversary. **Page 1B**

Midnight Madness
Blue Ridge basketball teams take on visiting alumni to kick off season.

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Photo submitted by Jennifer McKee

Hunter's Moon

Local photographer Jennifer McKee captured this picture of a Hunter's Moon rising over the mountains on Nov. 2.



Photos by Kelly Donaldson/Staff

Area children learn about wolves

Last Friday, Nov. 6, Rob Gudger gave a wolf presentation to children from Cashiers United Methodist Church at the Cashiers Community Center at 4:30 p.m. (shown above). The presentations, made possible by Wild South, are meant to educate school children on wildlife and the outdoors. Also last Friday, the Wild South program offered Summit Charter School students a chance to take a guided trip through Cattaaloochee to see the elk and their habitat. On Tuesday, Nov. 24, Gudger and his wolves will give a program at Blue Ridge School at 9 and 10 a.m.

CAHILL: Cashiers resident defines what it means to be an American veteran

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an explosion. A "Bouncing Betty," a type of landmine that shoots 10 to 12 feet in the air before exploding, had wounded all 12 of the infantrymen who had begun setting up and had taken off their flak jackets.

"Due to the severity of the wounds, my platoon sergeant didn't act the way he should have," Cahill said. "He was overcome."

When the platoon came to Cahill, who was the next in command, he never hesitated to take charge.

"I had to get a couple of guys out for security, prioritize the wounded, call in a MedEvac, and start basic first aid because the medic was severely wounded," Cahill remembered. "That was the moment I found clarity of purpose, when I knew what I was meant to do."

After an 18-month stint in Washington, D.C., Cahill began his second tour of Vietnam in 1973. Yet, even with unquestionable courage, Cahill remembers times of war that left him "paralyzed."

Clearing the way for infantrymen, combat engineers were generally the "tunnel rats," responsible for clearing North Vietnamese tunnels. Cahill never buckled when his turn arrived, though he admits, "it was the scariest thing in the world."

"There were times when I wasn't sure that I would know how to react, because

you're scared to death, absolutely petrified," Cahill explained. "You're a step away from being paralyzed, but you're saying, 'I have to do this,' particularly after you hear somebody and you know it's going to be him or you."

There until the very end, Cahill was an executive officer in Saigon when the military withdrew, leaving Cahill and his men as the last military force remaining in Vietnam.

It was the same focus and determination that helped him survive tunnels in Vietnam that also helped him build a highly decorated career after the war.

Cahill went from being a recruitment officer in Raleigh to becoming the operations officer for the first combat engineer battalion after training with the Army Advanced Engineering School. Following time in Okinawa and Korea, Cahill built mock Soviet missile sites while testing tomahawk missiles and helped train Navy Seals out of Camp Pendleton, Calif.

He was selected for colonel in 2006 and went to the highest-level school in the Marine Corps, the Navy War College, where future generals receive education at the highest level of military operations and strategy.

"It was interesting because your classmate in the next cubicle may have

just given up command of a nuclear submarine," Cahill said. "These were the highest ranking people around."

There, Cahill received an advanced degree in defense economic decision making, training him to make decisions on billion-dollar equipment. This degree also landed him a position in charge of all Marine Corps housing, handling over \$900 million a year.

Considered for the rank of general on numerous occasions, Cahill finally retired from the military when a new assignment pushed for him to go back to Okinawa for three years. Yet, during all of this military madness he also found time to

compete eight times in the world famous Iron Man triathlon: an endurance race consisting of a 2.4-mile open-ocean swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 20-mile marathon.

After a mind boggling military career, there seemed to be little that Cahill could not accomplish. So where did he turn...to charity and volunteerism of course.

"I felt that I had led a good life and that I should give something back to the community," Cahill said. "At the time, I wasn't concerned about money and I felt a moral obligation to try and do something for the good of somebody."

Cahill took a position as the executive director of

a school in Orlando that provided training and job placement for disadvantaged adults. When downsizing cut funding to the school, Cahill moved on to become the director of non-profits in Orange County, Fla.

Following this trend, it should come as no surprise that when Cahill moved to Laurel Falls from Fla., he quickly furthered his calling with stewardship in the Cashiers community. When former Cashiers United Methodist Church pastor David Beam said they needed volunteers for the dental clinic, Cahill took up dental hygiene without any former training.

"So here I am, a retired Marine colonel, working for

Tom Smith, a Navy man, who got his dental training in the Navy," Cahill joked. "We harass each other all of the time."

On a more serious note, Cahill concluded, "The people we see in the clinic are good hard working people who have been put out of work by the economy and we're the only ones who can give them what they need."

So, what is the definition of an American? It would be difficult to find another person who exudes the principles of this country more than Col. Robert Cahill.

This local hero defines what it means to be American and exemplifies every honor of this Veterans Day.



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