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Judge Doss resigns: Committee begins inquiry

by Al Summers

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Appalachian Judicial District Superior Court Judge Oliver Harris "Harry" Doss Jr. has submitted a letter of resignation, dated Friday, Nov. 6, to Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue giving Saturday, Dec. 5, as the effective date of resignation. That is the day of the judge's 65th birthday.

Doss has been under investigation by the Georgia Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC) over the past few months and states in his letter that he was given a date of "no later than Nov. 7" to resign or face the consequence of having formal charges filed against him.

The judge gave Perdue two reasons why he was

resigning instead of fighting the investigation and subsequent charges.

Doss wrote, "I find it distasteful and wrenching to resign in the face of this fundamentally flawed notion of due process and fairness, but ending my judicial service seems to be the most responsible course for two reasons:

- It will not be financially feasible or fair to my family to utilize our limited financial resources for a lengthy and expensive trial, which would be required to present the full context of the JQC investigator's long and determined effort to undermine my judicial service.

- It would be profoundly unfair to the people, judicial staff and trial lawyers of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit to have a long continuation of the tension and distractions that have characterized much of this year."

The JQC filed a notice of formal proceedings Monday, Nov. 9 in the Georgia Supreme Court. The notice included 12 counts of violating all or parts of Canons

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Crosses honor Gilmer's veterans



Photo by Michael Andrews

Erected by the Dedicated Ellijay Merchants and Associates (DEMA) and displayed in front of the Gilmer County Office of Commissioners, over 200 white wooden crosses bore the names of deceased Gilmer County veterans from the Korean War to the current wars in the Middle East as part of Veterans Day, November 11. This is the second year the crosses have been displayed downtown. They will remain there until the week after Veterans Day. Full Veterans Day 2009 coverage will appear in next week's Times-Courier.

News Brief

Missing boy turns up 13 hour later

Deputies from the Gilmer County Sheriff's Department were joined by the Gilmer County Search and Rescue Unit, agents from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, aviators from the Georgia State Patrol's Aviation Unit and officers from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources last Wednesday, Nov. 4, to search for a boy who had disappeared from his home off Yukon Road.

Josh Chastain, 14, was discovered missing Wednesday morning when a family member went to awaken him for school.

Law enforcement officials converged on the area and set up a command post near the boy's home.

A search dog tracked a scent to a pile of clothes that was determined to belong to the boy, and officials speculated he might have been picked up in a vehicle at that point.

After following leads throughout the day, a relative received a tip the boy had been seen in another part of the county, and the relative went to retrieve him.

Chastain was brought to

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Daisey sniffs out suspects

by Al Summers

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Gilmer County's latest addition to its sheriff's department is already paying dividends.

Daisey the bloodhound tracked two fugitives on the run from an East Ellijay Police officer Wednesday, Oct. 28, and after locating one, stood guard while he was subdued by officers.

Derrick Johnson, 26, of Marietta, was wanted in connection with running over a motorcycle in the parking lot of the Pourhouse Restaurant in East Ellijay and leaving the scene.

East Ellijay Police Sgt. Mike McClure and Gilmer County sheriff's deputies Coy Turner and Sgt. Blue Patterson converged on the suspect on Victory Circle, along with deputy Greg McClure and K-9, Daisey.

The blood hound, recently obtained by the sheriff's department, tracked the passenger in the vehicle, Michael Higginbotham, to a grassy area where he was hiding flat on the ground. He was taken into custody without incident. Higginbotham, 28, is from Marietta.

Daisey then tracked Johnson to a wooded area where he was spotted by law officers, and he was placed under arrest.

Johnson was charged with D.U.I., leaving the scene of an accident, reckless driving and misdemeanor obstruction.

Higginbotham was charged with public drunkenness and obstruction.

Both were carried to the Gilmer County Detention Center.

Daisey came to the Gilmer County Sheriff's Department from the 832 K-9 Deputy Dogs organization.

The 832 K-9 Deputy Dogs



organization was formed by Duke and Angie Snodgrass in memory of their son, Kody Snodgrass. Kody was a law enforcement bloodhound handler with the Lake County, Florida, Sheriff's Office. He tragically lost his life in a motorcycle accident in 2001.

The mission of 832 K-9's Deputy Dogs is to raise, train and gift exceptional bloodhounds to law enforcement agencies. The bloodhounds are gifted to law enforcement agencies at little or no cost to the agency. The dogs are trained and ready to "hit the street" when gifted.

Approximately 60 bloodhounds have been gifted to law enforcement at the federal level, in 24 states and one foreign country.

832 K-9's Deputy Dogs gifts their bloodhounds only after screening applying agencies to determine that the dog will be properly utilized and cared for. The organization remains in contact with any agency

that receives a gifted bloodhound and requires regular reports from the agency.

More information about the organization can be obtained at the Web site www.deputydogs.org.

Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson told the Times-Courier, "We are proud and fortunate to have Daisey as a part of our staff. In the past, we have had to rely on tracking dogs to be brought from a prison or another jurisdiction before we could begin earnestly tracking a suspect or lost person. She has already located a few people who have wandered away from home. She and deputy (Greg) McClure make a good team."



Photo by Al Summers

Deputy Greg McClure, left, and Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson, right, pose with Daisey the bloodhound as she made her media debut Monday, November 9.



Ellijay Community Blood Drive

Thursday, Nov. 12 12-6pm

Ellijay Lions Club

1729 South Main Street Ellijay, GA

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