

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Semper Fi, Dick Metzler!

After serving in the USMC and the other jobs I started working in the "Merchant Marine field", not knowing a thing about the Merchant Marine. I now say that the Merchant Marine is the forgotten "sixth" service. The Merchant Marine was founded in 1775, before we were officially a nation. During the early years serving was not easy, with harsh punishment, lack of food, and horrible conditions. Thus, the advent of the "rum" allotment. In 1915 congress passed the Seamen's Act which protects Merchant Mariners from these harsh conditions. The Merchant Marine motto is "In Peace and War", which they have done gallantly through the years.

The Veterans' Corner
 Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



During WW II the Merchant Marine was under the command of the USCG that was responsible for building of thousands of commercial vessels and training of Merchant Marine personnel. At the onset of the war training was conducted at New London, CT and Alameda, CA later expanded to a number of other locations. During the war 215,000 persons served in the Merchant Marine with 8651 perishing, the highest percentage of any service. We also lost 1550 ships to military action. To this day the Merchant Marine is the only service not receiving VA benefits, although there are numerous medals that can be awarded for meritorious service and valor.

The Merchant Marine has served through all wars. During the Korean War they not only delivered 75% of the needed supplies but were a key element in the evacuation of the First Marine Division, at Hung Nan after they fought their way out of the Chosin Reservoir.

During the Vietnam War the Merchant Marine transported 95% of the supplies used by our armed forces. In 1975 the Merchant Vessel "SS Mayaguez" and her crew were captured in international waters off of Cambodia / Vietnam. The seizure prompted a US attack by Marines and the crew was released in good health. This incident marked the last official battle of the Vietnam War.

The Merchant Marine continues to serve and support most of the US Military supplies, 7 to 15 tons per soldier per year; through the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS). MSTS vessels are supplied by the Navy and crew by Merchant Mariners.

The Merchant Marine is one of the services that has its own academy. The MMA is located at Kings Point, NY, and serves to train Merchant Marine Officers. The academy is a fully accredited academy and future Officers are only accepted through a Congressional Appointment.

The Coast Guard licenses all Merchant Mariners; licensing varies from a "Master of unlimited area and tonnage" (Captain) down to an ordinary seaman with pay scales into the mid six figures. Licenses must be renewed every five years, within guidelines set forth by the Coast Guard. Maybe it's time that the US Merchant Marine is fully recognized as the sixth service, for its undaunted service and valor! "Heave Ho, My Lads, Heave Ho."

R. Metzler (Capt.)

An Attitude of Exceptionalism

We often give our institutions and our intentions more credit than they deserve for how history unfolds. Americans are given to an attitude of exceptionalism, and perhaps we are, but not entirely for the reasons we think.

From the very beginnings of this nation there has been a struggle to hunt and gather the resources that allowed us to prosper. That struggle has very often been outside the awareness of the average citizen. Most of us are too busy with our daily lives to question the official narrative of our history, and if we think about it at all, we tend to either accept at face value the story of our sacrifices in the defense of freedom, or we view that same history as yet another story of greed and the lust for power.

The truth is probably a lot more complicated, and more interesting, than we have imagined.

This country has been at war for all but a handful of the years since 1776, and the clear majority of those wars have been either to expand our borders or beyond our borders. A large part of our exceptionalism has been the good luck of being isolated from troubles the rest of the world has endured by the large oceans to our east and west and relatively peaceful neighbors to our north and south.

Today we have numerous military bases outside of our borders. The exact number is argued, but it is reported to be around 200 bases. Our military presence is concentrated around energy rich areas of the world and the trade routes which allow the movement of energy and resources.

From the years leading up to WWI, our affluence has depended heavily on one thing: oil. First with our domestic supply and then with our ability to extract it from undeveloped nations, we have enjoyed cheap and plentiful energy. This is how cheap energy has affected our affluence:

One clear indicator of a healthy economy is the economic virtuous cycle. A simple, "back of the napkin" description of that self-propagating cycle is that investment leads to growth in production, which leads to higher real wages, which stimulates more consumption which increases profits and leads to more investment. Since about 1972 the virtuous cycle has been "broken." Productivity has continued to increase while real wages have declined.

EROI is an acronym for "energy return on investment." Some economists argue that when you chart EROI against wage growth, there is a correlation. Cheap energy more than anything else has empowered our economic virtuous cycle.

That situation is changing. Energy is more expensive to find, extract, convert to usable forms and distribute.

What if the relative peace and prosperity that have learned to expect as given - was a black swan event. What if human nature only allows the hard-fought freedoms and privileges we have enjoyed to flourish when the economy is expanding and the economic virtuous cycle is functioning? In other words, what if the American Way is less a function of intent and institution and more a function of EROI? That would explain a lot, wouldn't it? It would explain the consistency of geopolitical strategy which has unfolded independently of political parties. It would explain why every president in living memory has gone to Washington full of ideals and promises only to see those ideals splash noisily but ineffectively against the rocks of geopolitical reality.

More evidence for the "EROI theory of history" can be found in our uncomfortable alliance with Saudi Arabia, a nation whose beliefs and customs are almost anathema to our own. Saudi Arabia still holds some of the largest and cheapest-to-extract petroleum reserves in the world. In the 1970's, soon after we abandoned the Gold Standard, we agreed to defend the Kingdom against its enemies in exchange for access to oil - and oil that would be traded in American dollars. The "petro-dollar" trade has allowed the debt fueled growth of our economy, our military power and our affluence relative to the rest of the world.

Here in our peaceful valleys, isolated from so many of the troubles of the world, it has been easy to judge the decisions of empire builders. We stand by our opinion that greed and lust for power motivate much of what happens in the world. But we also know that only a psychopath gets up in the morning intending to do ill. Most people just do what they are led to do. We dig the holes that we dig and then we backfill those holes with ideals and rationalizations.

Korea, Vietnam, The Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria - These are holes that we dug and backfilled with "nation building" and "spreading democracy." But it was no coincidence that every one of those holes was near an energy source or a trade route. And the people who made the decisions to dig knew something that most of us still do not know: The affluence we enjoy, the ability to drive 10 miles for a jug of milk without a second thought, the lights we leave on all night, the food we waste, the oversized houses filled with plastic and the constant flow of garbage all depend on the constant flow of energy.

It is easy to judge the people who think they are defending a "way of life," but if we accept that way of life without question (and often without gratitude), we are complicit in the decisions that created it.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Hemlocks are an integral part of our forest ecosystems. They provide shelter for animals in the winter, keep streams cool, and aid in maintaining unique plant communities. However, for almost 70 years, our native hemlocks have been under a heavy amount of stress from the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). If you have seen small, white, fuzzy spots on your hemlock trees, they are undoubtedly infested with this little critter and, if the tree is left untreated, HWA will suck the life out of it.

HWA was first detected in the eastern part of the United States in 1951, though it had been on the West Coast since the 1920s. It is native to Asia, and it is thought it was introduced on an imported Asian hemlock tree. Since its detection, it has spread to 18 states, including Georgia, and has devastated hemlock stands throughout the Appalachians. In the native habitat, HWA populations rarely cause damage because Asian hemlocks have developed resistance to it, and it has many natural predators in this environment. However, our native hemlocks do not have the same defenses and it has no predators here, allowing populations to explode and drain the life out of trees.

This insect has a unique and complex life cycle with six stages: one egg, four nymphal (immature) phases, and one adult. Adult females that overwinter are oval-shaped, soft-bodied and black, but have a characteristic "woolly" appearance (hence their name). Newly hatched HWAs are reddish brown and readily crawl or disperse on the wind to find new places to feed. They will often spread to a new branch or tree and situate themselves at the base of the needles. They have specialized sucking mouthparts that are like needles which they inject into the twig to access the tree's nutrients. Once they insert their mouthparts, they stay attached to the tree for the rest of their lives as they mature and produce eggs of their own.

HWA is found most often on the newest growth because this is where the tree directs the most nutrients. However, as they feed, the tree senses the attack and blocks off affected area. This not only disrupts nutrients from getting to the insects but also to the rest of the tree beyond where they are feeding. This leads to branch death and, depending on the infestation, death of the entire tree. The greater the population of HWA on a tree, the more dramatic the hemlock's immune response, and the sooner it dies.

The best way to treat HWA problems is to prevent them. You can do this by treating your hemlocks with an insecticide (usually imidacloprid) that is injected into the soil. This allows the roots to take up the chemical and spread it throughout the tree, though it can take 6-12 months to fully protect. If you have previously treated a hemlock, after about 5-7 years, you may start to see HWA on the lower, older branches. This means that the treatment is running out and needs to be reapplied. To eliminate populations of HWA that may have established during the lapse in treatment, a tree and shrub pesticide spray containing imidacloprid may be applied to the infected branches.

In addition to pesticides, a powerful means of controlling these insects is releasing their natural predators. Several species of predatory beetles which specialize on HWA have been imported and evaluated for their ability to control these populations. Luckily, the results of these beetle trials are promising and provide additional hope for our hemlocks.

UGA extension
 From the Ground Up
 Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor:

Mind control from Towns County to Wall St:
 The Southern Baptist option or the Roman Catholic option. These are just two recent examples of how our minds are being manipulated by the media and thought police charged with promoting fake reality. Of course, not all is lost in the culture wars for our minds when you consider that the fastest growing demographic, nearly 25% of the American public, is atheist or agnostic.

Recent discoveries of earthlike planets orbiting stars and possibly supporting life, are the latest proof that the 14.7 billion-years-old universe, is the only reality worthy of our understanding. Ancient Scriptures are ideas based on bowing before and being obedient to higher authorities. It is a tale told to justify a slave-master rationale which is so much mind control meant to stifle a real understanding of nature and human society.

Religious dogma is a dead end; it is fixated on the supernatural reward in some unknowable afterlife of heavenly bliss. Instead, what is needed is to live for today in the real world with an eye toward understanding how to make human society devoid of religious strife and a world based on peace without racism, nationalism and wars that enrich a few at the expense of the many.

Sincerely,
 Lance G. Jobson

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc.

Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

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Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Wednesday	
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
	Every Friday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
	First Monday of each month:	
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	6 pm
Young Harris Coun.	YH City Hall	7 pm
	First Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
	First Thursday of each month:	
Stephens Lodge	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Monday of each month:	
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Tuesday of each month:	
Caregiver support	Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Calvary Alliance Chapel	6 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm

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Towns County Herald

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