

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Why America's Best...

### Why America's Best Is Yet to Come

July is here, and with it, America turns 249 – a stunning milestone for a nation born in defiance and idealism on a sweltering July day in Philadelphia. In 1776, thirteen disparate colonies took a leap of faith, setting aside their differences to issue a declaration that would ripple across history. Even the most visionary among them could not have pictured the country that would grow from their signatures.

What began as a fragile experiment has become a living testament to resilience and transformation. Today, we are fifty states strong – hundreds of millions of people, drawn from every corner of the globe, bound together by a shared commitment to something larger than ourselves. Materially, we have achieved things the founders could never have imagined. We live longer, safer, and healthier lives. Diseases that once decimated communities are now rare or gone. Our children enjoy opportunities in education and technology undreamed of in the days of the Continental Congress. The average American's standard of living far surpasses anything known even to royalty just a century ago. Yet, as our inventions and discoveries multiply, we are reminded that the true worth of our progress lies in how it uplifts the human spirit and serves our neighbors.

Still, the progress runs deeper. The ideals of liberty and justice, once limited in reach, have become living promises for ever more Americans. Barriers of race, gender, and background that once seemed insurmountable are steadily falling. Each generation has worked – sometimes painfully – to broaden the definition of who belongs, bringing more voices and dreams into the fold. The arc of our story bends toward inclusion and renewal.

This national journey hasn't been easy, and it's far from over. But it's worth remembering how, time and again, Americans have answered the call to improve not just their own lives, but the lives of others. From neighbors rebuilding after natural disasters, to citizens advocating for fairness and reform, to everyday people volunteering in soup kitchens or tutoring children in need – these small acts knit the fabric of our nation even tighter. Our communities are resilient, creative, and full of people who quietly make life better for those around them.

Innovation is woven into our national character, but so too is the quiet, persistent goodness of ordinary Americans. "Righteousness exalts a nation," as King Solomon teaches in the book of Proverbs, and these everyday acts of decency continue to uplift us all. When crisis strikes, neighbors step up for each other; civic groups, volunteers, and communities spring into action. Sometimes, the best of America unfolds quietly, away from headlines and noise, in small acts of generosity and determination.

Yet with so much quiet progress, it's easy to lose sight of how far we've come amid the loudness of our divisions. News cycles focus on what's broken, and online argument can make us feel more distant from one another. But look closer, and the signs of hope are everywhere: new businesses are born every day, medical and scientific breakthroughs continue, and a generation of young people, often underestimated, are more creative and globally minded than any before. "E Pluribus Unum" – out of many, one – isn't just a motto. It's a challenge we continue to meet, again and again.

The Fourth of July isn't merely a day for fireworks and parades. It's a call to remember how far we've come, and to renew our belief in what's possible. Our founders risked everything for a future they could only glimpse; we honor them best by building on their achievements – by G-d's grace and the strength of our people – confident that our best days are ahead.

So here's to America: never perfect, but always striving, always reaching higher. May we continue to hold high the torch of freedom, stand up for justice, and work together for a future bright with promise. As we celebrate another year, let's renew our faith in each other, and in the grand, ongoing story of this nation.

Happy birthday, America. Your greatest chapters are still to come.

*Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. You can contact him at y@tasteoftorah.org.*

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## Towns County Community Calendar

<b>First Monday of each month:</b> School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
<b>Every Tuesday:</b> Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b> Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b> Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
<b>Third Monday of each month:</b> Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b> Commissioner's Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

## Towns County Herald

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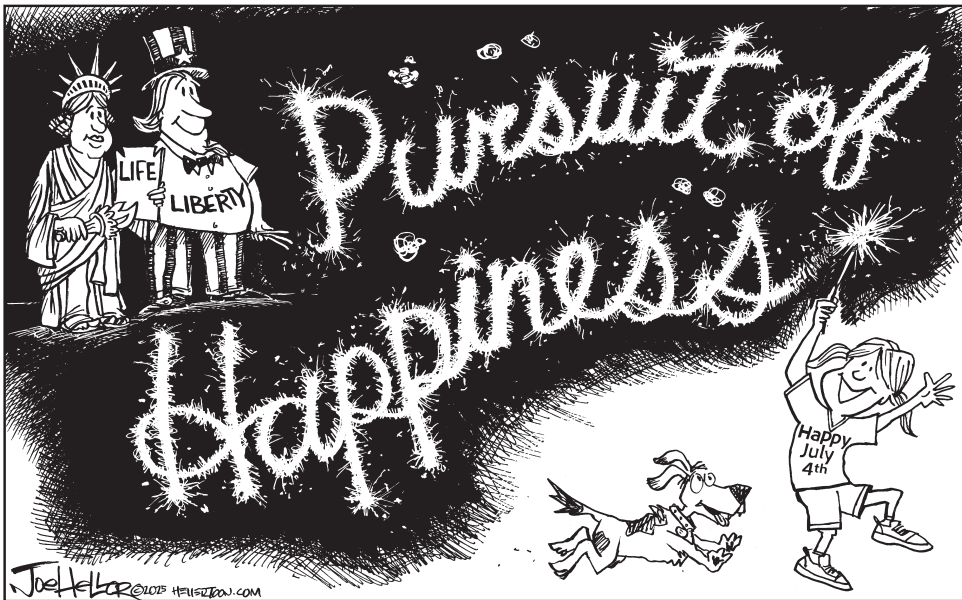
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## To Sweat Like A Pig

The hogs are with us again. They have been with us since De Soto brought them here for food in the 1500s. In the early 1900s, Russian boars imported for sport escaped hunting preserves and bred with De Soto's legacy and the free-ranging feral pigs of regional farmers.

The cross turned survivors into thrivers, creating a hybrid with the intelligence and aggression of the Russian combined with the prolific breeding of domestic pigs. The population here waxes and wanes, and despite sustained efforts to control it, enough always survive to multiply again and come back to plow your field for you.

Tracey and I have been more fortunate than some. The herd plowed a beautiful fuel break for us during the Rock Mountain and Boteler fires in 2016, when wildlife caught between the two fires was driven here ahead of the flames. The pigs saved me hours of labor digging up my sweet potatoes and left them intact because they were either in a hurry or didn't like the taste.

Recently they uprooted a swath of pesky bamboo sprouts that return every year to make me regret ever planting bamboo, and they subsoiled a patch I've been conditioning for Tracey's sunflowers. My neighbor and I were joking about how much we should charge to rent out our team of hogs for plowing gardens and undergroving. He thinks we should charge by the mile.

Many farmers, gardeners, and lawn lovers are not amused. The pigs are highly destructive and do great ecological damage to the mountain ecosystem, not to mention the costly destruction of many a hayfield. They do have one weakness though: They don't like electricity, and if my beans and tomatoes could talk, they would tell a harrowing tale of the night a pig got tangled in the electric mesh fence that protects them.

That fence needs maintenance today, and it's not going to happen while I'm sitting here drinking coffee and pushing pixels. "It's not hot enough to work yet," we often say in jest. The thermometer touched 60 degrees last night, and the cool, delicious air is pushing me back into my chair, even though every tired muscle knows that pounding t-posts is a lot more fun at 70 degrees than it is at 88 with 88 percent humidity.

Is it just me, or does the weather seem more miserable more often? Misery loves company, so I looked into the numbers to find something to blame. I was disappointed. The numbers say that relative humidity in our area has remained stable in spite of the constant massaging of fears about global warming.

So that means it's probably just me and a few grumpy friends and acquaintances. There is some evidence that COVID can have long-term effects on the body's ability to regulate temperature, and we've all had the 'rona by now, but the evidence is inconclusive.

Which brings us back to "misery loves company." Simmering in information and hype while the big weather show gives names to individual thunderstorms, news breaks at all hours to tell us that summer is hot in case you forgot from the last time they told you 15 minutes ago. When you make a habit of thinking about being hot, you might just start to feel hot.

There is also an inconvenient truth pushing back on the recliner. As one approaches that 39th birthday and then recedes from it, the body's ability to handle heat diminishes. Sure, we ran wind sprints with the football team in June and hiked with a 70 lb backpack in July and replaced the shingles on the roof in August, but maybe all that didn't happen last week, or even last year.

Come to think of it, there is a stack of t-posts waiting for me in the shade right now, and the sun is starting to peek over the ridgeline. If I get up now I may finish the job before it's necessary to sweat like a pig. Pigs don't have sweat glands, by the way, but you knew that. See you next week.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

**Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor**  
**P.O. 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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## Ripe Watermelon

Watermelon is almost a necessity for the 4th of July in my opinion. Everybody has a favorite way to eat watermelon.

Mine is to put it in the fridge to get it nice and cold, cut it up in slices, and put a little salt on each bite as you eat it. If you don't have a fridge around a cold creek is a good alternative. But, if you accidentally pick a watermelon that's not all the way ripe, it might be a bummer once you cut it open. With the 4th of July coming I thought I would talk about how to select a ripe watermelon.

Watermelon requires a lot of heat to be able to grow. That means that watermelon grown in the mountains won't be ripe in time for the 4th of July. There are smaller varieties that don't take

as long to grow. Typically, watermelon take 70-90 days to be ready to harvest. If you are planting your own watermelon it's typically easier to start them from transplants, but you can start your own seeds. Watermelon plants will need 8 feet of space on each side.

If you are picking watermelon off the vine you want to look at the curly tendril that is on the stem closest to where it meets the fruit. When you see that curly tendril dry up and turn brown the watermelon is ripe and ready to harvest.

If you are looking at watermelon that has already been picked there are a couple of tricks that you can use so that you look will a pro at the grocery store or market. You can thump a watermelon to gauge its ripeness. A ripe watermelon will have more of hollow thud sound to it. An unripe watermelon will have a higher pitched, less hollow sound to it. It's usually best to thump multiple melons with this approach to really be able to gauge the ripeness. Another approach is the check the ground spot. This is just the spot where the watermelon sat on the ground. If it has a creamy yellow or buttery white color then it is ripe. If the ground spot is plain white then it's not ripe yet.

As watermelon ripen the green color will start to dull. So, if the watermelon still has a sharp green hue, it's probably not ripe. If you are picking a striped watermelon this method is particularly useful. Another tip is to pick up two watermelons of similar size. The heavier one is riper. Be careful using this tip because if it is too heavy, then it's overripe.

A whole watermelon will stay ripe for about 2 weeks if it's stored below 60 degrees. At room temperature it will last for about 10 days.

Seedless watermelon is very popular and make up 92% of watermelon sales in the US. Seedless watermelon is not genetically modified, rather it is how they are bred that makes them seedless. Some watermelon is diploid, which means they have 2 sets of chromosomes. Other watermelons are tetraploid, which means they have 4 sets of their chromosomes. When plant breeders cross pollinate a diploid with a tetraploid it creates a watermelon that produces a seed that are triploid. Those triploid seeds are planted to make seedless watermelon. Triploid watermelons are sterile. It's a similar concept breeding a mule, which is a cross between a horse and a donkey. These seedless watermelons might still produce a few seeds, but they won't mature and turn black. Seedless watermelon are easy to eat, but I think seeded watermelon tastes better.

If you have questions about watermelon contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Letters to the Editor

### Towns County Building Codes

To Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw,

As per our phone conversation, I call to your attention **PART II CODE OF ORDINANCES, CHAPTER 1, SECTION 1-2, (2).** In all interpretations the courts SHALL (mandatory) look to the **intention of the County Commissioner:**

Property Owners have informed me that Terry Conner with the Building Department has required them to divide and lot off their farm and property in order to qualify for a building permit for a residential house if there is already a house on their property, even though their property meets all requirements for an additional house. **This is against the language and my intent of the building codes that I adopted in 2006.** My intent was and is to keep our County's open spaces by protecting farms and tracts of property from being divided into subdivisions. Please inform the citizens of these facts and instruct the Building Department to stop this practice.

The Building Department required citizens to get a building permit and pay inspections fees to put outbuildings on their property. **This is strictly in violation of the ordinance. Sec 10-219 EXEMPTIONS TO INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS and INSPECTIONS:** Outbuildings such as accessory buildings (e.g. garages, barns, hay sheds, etc.) are **EXEMPT from building code inspections and inspection fees.** I am requesting that citizens and the media be informed that the ordinance prohibits this and that they should be reimbursed. After calling this to your attention, I commend the response you took as Commissioner in promptly stopping the building department from this practice and stating that you are in the process of reimbursing property owners for the 374 outbuilding permit payments which Mr. Conner informed you had been charged.

In 2006, during public hearings on adopting building codes and after comprehensive discussions with citizens on the pros and cons of what building codes should contain, I made and kept a commitment that if they supported adopting building codes, I would protect their property rights that included **EXEMPTING ALL OUTBUILDINGS**, in the building code ordinance. Towns Co. citizens voted 518 Yes to 8 No on a secret ballot election conducted by the Towns County election officials.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

**Bill P. Kendall**  
Former Sole Commissioner

### 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.

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