# DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

### **Scuttlebutt and Other News**

Maybe you've never heard that term, however most of us Veterans have heard it hundreds of times, experienced and participated in "scuttlebutt". In over-simplified term, it simply means "talk among ourselves." Rumors, mostly opinions, true or otherwise.

I would like to address ongoing issues concerning our Towns County VFW Thrift Store which serves to support our VFW Post #7807 and all the VSOs underneath that same roof. We represent not only the VFW, VFW Auxiliary, Marine Corps League, but also the second oldest, largest VSO in America, our American Legion Post #23, American Legion Auxiliary, American Legion Riders, and our Sons of American Legion (SAL). What some folks may be unaware of is that our Thrift Store is a community support project as well. And we have had, over the years volunteers from ALL of the aforementioned organizations assisting the efforts to keep our Thrift Store "healthy' Most all of us older Veterans are getting a wee bit older, more tired and even experiencing health issues. In the words of John Harkins our newly elected

VFW Commander: End of summer blow out. All summer items are on sale, summer clothing especially. On sale every thing in the store everything is price negotiable. We need to move it out to get ready for the holidays and win-

USCG Veteran ter coming up. Date sept. 26,

Time 0900/1500. Hot dogs, and drinks will be available. Volunteers are needed, 0800 to help set up, 1500 for break down. Let's pull together and put some money in our

The

Veterans'

Corner

Scott

Drummond

"build the building fund" And might I add that our Veterans would appreciate some younger ( or older) Veterans or other qualified applicants to join one of our VSO groups and give us older folks and our community a hand and some new ideas as to how we can complete our missions.

In that same mode: It's time to grow our American Legion family. "It's been a little more than a year since the LEGION Act was signed into law, which extended the ongoing declared period of war back to Dec. 7, 1941. The act paved the way to honor thousands of veterans who were killed or wounded on duty during periods not previously considered wartime.'

This long OVERDUE act was signed into law by our Commander-in-Chief, Donald Trump which removed prior restrictions for honorably discharged Veterans who may not have served during official wartime eras. The American Legion. A congressionally charted organization of veterans of the United States Armed Forces founded in 1919 by veterans returning home from Europe after WW I. It is headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, has about 3 million members with 14,000 posts worldwide.

Here, in Towns County we are a mixed group of Veterans and family associates. We'd appreciate some "new blood" to come join in and assist us in any of our Veteran or community projects, especially in this vexing time, for all of America.

Semper Paratus

# **Letters to The Editor**

#### **Social Security**

#### Dear Editor,

I had not planned to respond to the writer of "Rolling My Eyes" (Letter to the Editor, Towns County Herald, Aug. 26, 2020) mainly because of his tacit agreement with my thesis that President Trump's payroll tax deferral scheme is blatant vote buying with the unusual twist that he is paying for our vote with our own money. While I think the writer's false analogy to Medicare for All is spurious for many reasons, that is a discussion for another time. Rather than dwell on areas of agreement, I write to address where we disagree. Without evidence, the writer claims Social Security has been mismanaged for decades. Really? On the investment side there is not much managerial discretion. Trust funds, by law, may be invested only in Federal securities. On the benefit distribution side, eligibility is controlled by specific criteria. Overpayment errors consumed 0.64 percent of Social Security outlays in 2018. For comparison, private industry loses 20 to 30 percent of revenues to inefficiency, according to marketing research. The mythical "La la land" to which he consigned me unless he has contrary evidence, is actually the habitat of his ipse dixit proposition. If an argument for mismanagement exists, it is in Trump's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and his intentions for the payroll tax. His early and persistent inaction is deepening and prolonging the pandemic. As a result, more than 13 million people are out of work. When people don't work they don't pay into the trust fund, thus weakening it. This has the potential to hasten Social Security insolvency by six years and could result in a 31 percent cut in benefits after 2029, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center. His payroll tax deferral scheme is the greater mismanagement. Paul Van de Water with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates the deferral could reduce the Social Security trust funds by another \$100 billion, further exasperating the problem. Moreover, Trump's proposal to eliminate the payroll tax entirely, if not offset, would force Social Security into insolvency by the middle of calendar year 2023, according to the Chief Actuary of the Social Security Administration. Offsetting the loss out of general revenues would require raising taxes by \$1.034 TRILLION or increasing the debt by an equal amount annually. (Budget cutting won't work.) Finally, there is that claim Trump knows what he is doing with respect to the economy. Trump's record is hardly one of eco nomic prowess, considering his properties declared bankruptcy six times, he lost \$1 billion on bad investments over 10 years and other business failures include \$60 mail-order Trump steaks and the fraudulent Trump University. This is not the record of an economic genius. As responsible voters we should emphasize facts over fear and truth over fiction when we assess any politician's proposals and performance. While I focused on areas of disagreement, I associate myself with the writer's hope that our nation will recover with God's help because it certainly won't under Trump's leadership.



## **Chaos Theory**

fodder you've probably seen the word "chaos" in the headlines quite frequently this year. If you believe the headlines, it would seem that the entire



it's unprecedented. It isn't, but that kind of news doesn't keep shareholders happy.

Nevertheless, news fodder presents a problem for those of us who want to stay informed without sacrificing happiness or peace of mind. Fortunately, we can do just that.

Since we're dealing with chaos, perhaps "chaos theory might offer some clue as to how we can navigate the snark-infested waters of the information age. Chaos Theory is a branch of mathematics that examines "complex systems whose behavior is highly sensitive to slight changes in conditions, so that small alterations can give rise to strikingly great consequences.'

If you've heard of Chaos Theory you may also have heard the metaphor about how a butterfly flapping its wings in the Caribbean can initiate a chain of events which leads to a hurricane. Humanity intuited this truth long before mathematicians attempted to codify it. "A stitch in time saves nine." "For the want of a nail, a shoe was lost. For the want of a shoe, a horse was lost. For the want of a horse, a rider; for the want of a rider, a message. For the want of a message, a kingdom was lost, for the want of a nail.'

So it follows that the very first opportunity we have to influence the complex systems that are our daily lives is that moment early in the morning when we become aware that our eyes are still closed. You might be amazed how a prayer at that precise moment can set the tone for the day, and not just any prayer, but one of gratitude. Gratitude begins the process of curating the elements of our day, emphasizing what is useful, and disregarding what is not.

As thinking beings and responsible citizens, we like to stay informed, so many of us set the tone for our day by consuming news products. We already know what the headlines are going to say, but they are habit forming. They stimulate the rubber-necking, roller coaster riding, horror movie watching, adrenaline producing centers of our brain, plus we get the selfsatisfying feeling that we are well informed.

We never quite make the connection that the worried, unsettled, unhappy and angry feelings that we carry for the rest of the day, that influence our decisions and empty the bottle of antacids in our desk, all begin first thing in the morning. Oh, and just in case the nasty begins to wear off or we develop a olerance for it, we can always up the dosage with a booster shot at lunch and dinner, or any time in between that we open any of the most popular websites. As for being well informed, let's pause for a moment and list the ten most memorable headlines that made us happier or richer or a better person. Top five? Just one headline? Well now! Perhaps we're looking at the wrong headlines. Maybe what Maddow said about what Trump said about what Pelosi said about Trump is not very useful after all. OK, what if we eliminate political opinions and just stick to the facts? That's a start, but maybe knowing the precise details of the 5 people out of 327 million who got shot last night, or will get shot tomorrow night, is not something we need to know every hour of every day. Yes, these events are "news" in the sense that they did happen, but they are not truths. They are not the whole story, because 326, 999, 995 people did NOT get shot last night, and of the 800,000 police officers currently serving in the United States, 799,750 did not shoot anyone last year. You see where we're going with this. Death happens. Bad things happen. But that's only a fraction of the whole story, and we're not going to see the rest of the story unless we look for it. How many of us knew, for example, that billionaire, Charles Feeney just fulfilled a lifelong dream of giving away his \$8 billion fortune? Or that a Connecticut teenager saved a mother and her three children by pulling them out of a burning car? Did you hear about the 13 year old who invented a kit to prevent drowning? How about the group of teenagers who transformed a liquor store into a food market to serve a needy community? You probably didn't hear about these stories because good news is not good for the current business model of the companies that control information. They remain relevant by keeping us worried, angry, divided, and addicted to the little doses of adrenaline and serotonin they provide throughout the day. They take no responsibility for their influence over our mental health, which directly affects our physical health, but our pharmaceutical companies stand ready to help us out there The solution isn't easy, but it's simple. Begin the day with gratitude. This is the nail that saves the kingdom. It's not as habit forming as chaos, but if you keep at, it it will transform your life like exercise and eating right. Be well informed, but shop for information like you would shop for the best deal on a used car. Curate your life experience.

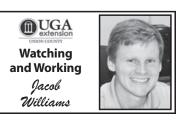
# Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Have you seen small white cottony balls on hemlock trees? If you have then that means those trees are infested with Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). Let's look at why it's important to preserve hemlocks, what is the pest that is killing them, and what you can do to save them. We are getting to the time of year when they really start to come out.

Hemlocks are a native species that ranges from Maine to Northern Alabama. They are a keystone species that provides habitat for about 120 species of vertebrates and over 90 species of birds. Hemlocks are unique in their ability to thrive in shade. This attribute makes them common in ravines and along rivers and streams. Their proximity to streams and rivers means that they are crucial in reducing erosion and watershed protection. Hemlocks can be identified by their needles. They have short flat needles with two distinctive pale white stripes on the underside. The needles are wider at the base and taper to a rounded tip, unlike firs that have parallel sides the whole way down.

HWA is a very small insect. The white cottony sacks on

the hemlock trees are egg sacks of HWA. They are an invasive species from Asia that doesn't have a natural predator here. HWA feeds on the sap inside of hemlock trees. Wind, birds, deer, or humans can spread the HWA. Once a tree has



become infected, it will die within four to 10 years. Therefore, it is important to treat trees as soon as possible after finding that they have been infected.

It is important to treat your own trees with cultural and chemical controls. Cultural controls include keeping hemlocks well mulched and watered. Hemlock trees don't have very deep roots and droughts can make them more susceptible to infection. Don't place any bird feeders or deer feeders near your trees. Birds and deer can carry the eggs for long distances. If you are hiking in an area that has HWA wash your clothes afterward because you may be carrying eggs. Be careful to not over-fertilize your trees as that could make them more enticing to HWA. Cultural controls may keep your trees healthy, but when they become infested, chemical controls are the only option. Chemical controls involves treating your tree with either Imidacloprid or Dinotefuran, and is the most common and effective method of control. An imidacloprid treatment will last four or five years. However, it may take one year before it is effective. Dinotefuran will last for two years in the tree and will take about four to six weeks to take effect. The ideal way to apply either of these insecticides is by soil injection or soil drench. Putting the insecticide in the soil will mean quicker uptake by the plant and reduce the chance of off target drift. If the trees are near open water, a trunk injection of insecticide is necessary, which will require a professional. Whenever applying a pesticide it is important to familiarize yourself with the label before using the product.

The Union and Towns County Extension Offices each have a soil injector that is available to be checked out. Checking it out requires a \$250 dollar deposit that will be returned when the injector is brought back. I also have a soil drench kit in each office, which are simpler to use, especially if you don't have many trees. You must provide your own insecticide. Contact your local Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob. Williams@uga.edu if you have any questions about HWA.

# It Only Takes One Spark!

All it takes is one spark RC&D and it is out of control! Currently there are many huge wildfires Frank raging across the western states destroying everything in their Riley paths that have killed at least 35 Executive people with many more missing. Director 2020 is turning out to be one of the worst fire seasons on record and it is not over yet. Deadly wildfires such as the ones that have been raging in California, Washington, and Oregon since mid-summer all begin with something as simple as sparks from downed power lines, flat tires, trailer chains dragging, a backfire from a small engine, a tossed cigarette butt, lightning, or in some cases an intentional match. That spark, combined with tinder-dry forests and howling winds, can be all that is needed to start a catastrophic wildfire. Once a fire ignites, the combination of heat, oxygen and fuel can cause it to explode in size. At its height, the Camp Fire of 2018 in California was burning the equivalent of 60 football fields per minute. In the early history of the Earth, nearly all wildfires were started by lightning strikes. Now humans are responsible for the vast majority of fires. About 84 percent of wildfires in the USA are started by people, according to a comprehensive study in 2017 and it holds true here in Georgia. And the majority of our fires are caused by debris burning. More than a million acres have burned in Oregon. In Oregon, where firefighters are battling 16 large blazes, 40,000 people are under mandatory evacuation orders. Office of Emergency Management (OEM) says the fires have killed 10 people, but officials warn the final death toll could be much higher. "There's a lot that can be done to lessen the destruction" researchers say, and "we better start doing it or otherwise we will have news like what we had last fall and now again and again," referring to the ferocious wildfires that are sweeping through densely populated regions of northern California. "Many wildfires are caused by people living in close proximity to forests and wildlands. And when those fires spread, they are much harder to fight when people are living there, because lives are at risk, and because properties must be protected. Researchers recommend several land management practices to limit the negative effects of expanding wildland-urban interface, such as vegetation management (prescribed burning), use of appropriate building materials, and also we might throw in a dose of good old fashion common sense, such as "you can't live with fuel all around your house and do nothing without risking the consequences". People must realize that their dream of living in or near forests is not without certain risks that must be considered in order to keep a wildfire from suddenly crashing into your dream and taking away all your stuff and maybe, your life. Surprisingly, while western fires are often the most newsworthy, a study found that much of the growth of the wildland-urban interface has been in the densely populated eastern U.S. so don't let your guard down, It can and will happen here! Most of you think that all of our constant preaching about wildfires around here is just a lot of hot air, and that it won't happen here, but those newly homeless people in the west thought the same thing and did nothing about it, and now it's too late.



If you consume news world is suffering from chronic onthemiddlepath.com emotional acid reflux. They say

#### David Plunkett

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