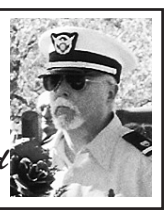
DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Pearl Harbor Day 75th anniversary

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



So much to choose from within this historical moment, the morning of 7 December, 1941. Here's an important event as told by a very special survivor, Mr. Will Lehner who served aboard the USS Ward.

On the morning of December 7, 1941 at 0630 the crew aboard the Ward sighted a submarine periscope in restricted waters offshore about five miles or so outside our Naval Base at Pearl Harbor. Lehner said, "So we looked around, and all of a sudden we see the conning tower come up out of the water. But we didn't know it was a Japanese sub; we didn't know what it was. Then finally the whole thing came up, and we were only 50 yards from it."

Lt. Commander William Outerbridge, the Ward's CO gave the order to fire.

The first shot went high and over the enemy submarine per Lehner, splashing right behind it. Then the second shot. Per Lehner, "I saw it hit the conning tower at the lower part of it." The shell hit, and the sub rolled over and came back up again and started going down. Well that was an hour and fifteen minutes before the Japanese planes came over".

Lt. Comdr. Outerbridge made radio reports to higher command but for some reason this report was dismissed and the enemy sub was never accounted for.

Will Lehner started telling his story after his time in our Navy and no one would believe that he and his crew actually fired the first shot (of WW II) and sunk a sneak attack Japanese submarine. Insofar as public historical accounts the story of the sub being sunk before the actual attack was never given credence either.

That all changed in August 2002 with a phone call from the Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory (HURL). Lehner and his fellow crewmates aboard the Ward were about to be vindicated after all these years!

Mr. Terry Kerby (from HURL) called and said, "I think we found that one you sunk. It's got a hole just where you said. I'm pretty sure it's that one. It's laying on a little sand dune down there. You can get a good shot at it."

Lehner was invited aboard a small research submersible by HURL. Soon he was 1200 feet down on the ocean's floor about five miles from the mouth of Pearl Harbor to come face to face with his old enemy after telling his story for more than six decades. They stayed down for more than three hours taking many photographs of the Type A Ko-hyoteki submarine that never was allowed to take a single American life.

Without evidence Mr. Lehner's story was doubted far and wide, but he, a first person witness and honorable US Navy sailor never changed his now proven to be true tale of the very first shot fired in WW II. We salute you and all who have served, Mr. Will Lehner!

Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor,

Fidel Castro's death, announced the day after Thanksgiving, brought back some vivid memories during my travels to Cuba between 1996 and 2004. On behalf of a Baptist church I was able to journey on four mission trips to deliver medicines and much needed supplies to the Cuban Christians residing in the community of Alamar, just east of Havana. Like with other dictatorships, religious liberty suffered under Fidel Castro. The government continually harassed religious leaders and their followers with detentions, confiscation of religious materials and restrictions on travel. As a result the Christians had to worship in tiny house churches. One of my contacts in Cuba tells me the house churches are beginning to grow now as a result of some loosened restraints, which is good news. However, the people still encounter serious food rationing. With the average salary of $50 per month it is very difficult for individuals to purchase even the bare necessities. Some doctors still have to drive taxis to make up for their inadequate salaries. Cuban citizens are not even allowed to stay in hotels, these are only allowed for the tourists! Presidente Castro lived 90 years and for over fifty years imposed a system that destroyed a country and kept him and his people in power. Let's pray that democracy will come soon to this little country just 90 miles from the shores of Florida.

Tim Groza

To the Editor:

Dear Ms. Gibby and Members of the City Council,

I read in the Towns *County Herald* that the city of Young Harris has been considering giving a variance to a developer to build a 5 story student housing complex in Young Harris. I noted the part of the article that says "some on the council have expressed their displeasure with the number of setbacks they have faced in trying to give the Provident Group the go-ahead to develop the building and property." Since it seems that the variance has support from at least some on the council, and given that there are always at least two sides to every story, I do want to hear both sides before I draw any definite conclusions.

However, where is the nearest 5 story building to Young Harris today? Does any rural mountain town in our area have such a structure? None that I can think of. A 5-story building seems the sort of thing you might find in a suburban complex in a metropolitan area like Atlanta, but such a structure would not be in keeping with the character of our community. What is the vision of the city council for developing our area? Do we think it would help or harm our tourist industry, not to mention the sentiments of our residents, if our community looked more like a suburb of Atlanta? Again, I am expressing my initial reaction after having read only one article on the topic in the paper, so I would like to hear the other side before forming a definite opinion on the topic.

Thank you,
Gil Bullard

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Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM • 706-896-4454

Cultural Literacy

The Middle Path
By: Don Perry

The "wheel of history" is an apt expression for describing an image of the movement of humanity through long periods of time. Our course is continuously altered by climate, technology, disease, war, and countless other factors, but the shape of the wheel, our human nature, is a constant that makes all of our movements seem repetitive whether we are rolling forward or backward.

Over shorter periods of time, such as those delimited by a lifetime or a generation, history often appears to be cyclic, like a pendulum or a tide. We observe this type of effect in politics and social change. In American politics there is an apparent pendulum motion between left and right, and that movement often seems to be driven more by our collective impatience and desire for change than by the relative success or failure of any particular ideology.

So here hangs the American voter, swinging from a rope attached to the axle of a wheel so large that it is difficult to discern its movements. Sometimes, however, we can catch a glimpse of its tracks and make a pretty good guess as to the direction we're traveling.

The "track" that some of us are following is the demographic change which is creating volatility here in the United States and elsewhere in the developed world. Simply put, the percentage of white folks that makes up our population is slowly but steadily decreasing. In 1980, 80% of Americans were Caucasian. Today that number is about 63%. There are several reasons for this change, but primarily it is because of the low birth rate among whites, immigration, and high birth rates among other races. Almost half of American children under five are minorities. Multi-racial Americans are the fastest growing group, followed by people of Asian descent and then Hispanics. The Census Bureau calculates that by 2043, Non-Hispanic Whites will still be the single largest ethnic group in America, but they will number less than half of the population.

Whatever your politics, the demographic change just described would be enough on its own to create volatility, but there is more. Add to the mix the aging of the Baby Boomers, steadily replaced in a shrinking work force by Generation X and Millennials, and the rapid departure of the Greatest Generation.

It is my opinion that the departure of the Greatest Generation has contributed significantly to the volatility created by social change. The Greatest Generation was the generation that sacrificed and endured to win the Second World War. They were the optimistic builders full of hope and determination who built the "laurels" that successive generations have rested on - and borrowed against. Their faith and pragmatism created the moral and ethical framework which has been the basis of the American way of life that still attracts people to our shores from all over the world. They were the anchor which held steady for the generations that followed, and as we continue to weigh anchor, our ship now begins to move in new directions.

Those of us who have and who are replacing previous generations are less stable. We spent our "inheritance" rather than building on it. We have been taught that right and wrong is "relative." We are less educated than our forbears. We spend more, eat more and read less. We know less about our government in all its forms, and we are less engaged in our communities.

All of this combines to produce another important factor which drives volatility, and that is the historically significant wealth gap between rich and poor. Taken together, you have a pretty good insight into the election of 2016. For reasons that will continue to be debated for years, most of us missed it. We vastly underestimated the ability of white Americans to put aside their differences, and make no mistake - those differences are numerous and divisive - to vote, often out of desperation, for the unpopular Donald Trump.

It does not bother me that liberals, angry at the defeat of Hillary Clinton, are vowing to resist whatever wrongs they believe a Trump Administration will bring. We need watchful Americans of all persuasions who are intent on holding government accountable.

What does bother me is the number of disappointed voters who continue to think of Trump supporters as monolithic. Your ad hominem attacks on a diverse group of people are no better than the racism that you condemn. I'm speaking now directly to the number of people who have told me that, since Trump supporters are racist, bigoted and misogynistic, that resisting Trump is now a "moral" duty.

Let me first point out that millions of Trump voters previously voted for Barack Obama. More women, more Muslims and more Latinos voted for Trump than for Romney. You simply cannot paint Trump supporters with such a broad brush.

Some of you who have spoken to me about your "moral" duty to fight against Trump may have forgotten how just a few years ago you condemned the "Moral Majority," and the religious right who had the audacity to pursue their objectives based upon what they believed to be moral.

Now the wheel has turned full circle, and a new "moral majority," based, I gather, upon the popular vote, mirrors the words and actions of people they very recently condemned. Such irony.

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.

Holly trees

UGA extension UNION COUNTY
From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee

Though we always see a lot of holly branches decorating the city this time of year, hollies actually make great landscape bushes year round. There are over 400 species of hollies and many of them have several different varieties that suit different landscaping needs. Whether you want a foundation planting, low hedge or trees, there is probably a holly variety for the space you want to fill.

Hollies require well-drained soil that is slightly acidic and has plenty of organic matter. Mulching is a good option to keep weeds down, and it will hold moisture and keep the soil cool. They can grow in part shade, but produce the most flowers and berries when they are planted in full sun. Planting in full sun also helps with maintaining their shape and minimizing pruning because the branches will not become leggy as they try to reach more sunlight. While many hollies are self-fertilizing, some varieties have exclusively male and female plants. Only the females will produce berries, and in order to do so, you will need a male holly nearby.

These plants are hearty, though they do have some problems. If hollies are not producing berries, there could be a pollination issue, high nitrogen levels in the soil, or a late frost that burned flowers that bloomed a little too early. It could also be that the varieties you have are immature and will not produce berries for a few more years, so always make sure to do your research before installing them on your property. Pests can also be a problem. Scale insects, bud moths, red mites and leafminers all feast on holly trees and bushes, and some cultivars are susceptible to root rot.

The American holly is a native plant and typically what inspires our Christmas decorations. It has large spiny leaves and bright red berries. They require a lot of space as they can grow up to fifty feet tall. Some common varieties are Stewart's Silver Crown, Merry Christmas, Jersey Delight and Jersey Princess (these require a Jersey Knight to be pollinated and produce berries). The Yellow Berry American holly also produces bright yellow berries if you are looking for a more unconventional tree. English and Yaupon hollies also grow into evergreen trees. English hollies have very distinctive leaves which have white variegated margins. The native range of the Yaupon holly is from New York to central Florida, and west all the way to Texas. In our area, it typically grows into a small to moderate sized evergreen tree up to fifteen feet tall and as large as ten feet wide. New growth is purple and turns green throughout the summer.

If you are looking for a smaller option, Japanese hollies are shrubs that typically have spineless leaves and black fruit. They average three to five feet and because they form thick hedges, they are a great alternative to boxwoods. Many different cultivars are available: Helleri is compact and grows up to four feet, Convexa has dark green leaves and produces many berries, Hetzii is a dwarf form of Convexa, and Roundleaf is a small male bush that does not produce any berries.

For more information on additional holly varieties and how to care for them, contact your extension office.

Reindeer Games

Towns County Community Calendar

Every Monday:		
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
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
Every Friday:		
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Every Sunday:		
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
First Monday of each month:		
Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
First Tuesday of each month:		
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	5:30 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.	Courthouse	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
Second Wednesday of each month:		
Basket Weavers	SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	Old Rock Jail	4 pm
Second Thursday of each month:		
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	5 pm
Second Friday of each month:		
Square Dance Club	Rec. Center	7 pm

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