

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

USCGC Alexander Hamilton

As our USA was being forced into WWII, the Coast Guard had demonstrated its much needed worth in America's national defense.



The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran

In one year the Coast Guard, its large cutters and experienced seamen, had protected American interests in the North Atlantic. They maintained patrols in Greenland and were prominent in protecting America's seaborne commerce.

The 327-foot cutters were well-suited for convoy duty in the North Atlantic. Their long-range and good sea-keeping qualities, along with their speed and armament, prompted the Navy Department put the entire class into naval service before the war began.

The United States Coast Guard Cutter Alexander Hamilton, participating with ocean escorts in the icy North Atlantic, became the Coast Guard's first loss of the war. The Alexander Hamilton was one of the newest ships in the USCG, commissioned in March 1937.

All the vessels in the class carried their full names when commissioned, but were shortened in 1937 to their surnames only. The US Navy requested that the Hamilton use its full name so as not to be confused with the Navy's U.S.S. Hamilton. In January 1942, the cutter resumed its full name once again.

When war began in Europe the cutter was ordered to Norfolk, VA to perform Neutrality Patrol duties. Our own Navy CPO, Bud Johnson (RIP, Bud! We love you, Bud!) told me of his frustration as to not being able to return fire during these "neutrality patrols", the NAZIS weren't neutral!

On 27 December, three weeks after Pearl Harbor, the Alexander Hamilton reported for special naval duty in the North Atlantic. Mixed groups of U.S. Navy, Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Navy escorts had begun to escort fast and slow convoys between rendezvous points off the coast of Newfoundland and mid-ocean meeting points (MOMP). At this point British escort groups protected the merchantmen eastward.

The 327 foot Campbell was the first cutter to perform this duty, followed by the Ingham then on January 15th 1942, the Alexander Hamilton.

The Alexander Hamilton was to tow the disabled store-ship Yukon to Iceland. A destroyer, USS Gwinn, steamed ahead to act as an escort. The British rescue tug Frisky arrived later to take over the tow. At about 1:00 pm, the Hamilton handed off the tow to Frisky and steamed ahead to screen the other ships.

Unknown to all the allied ships, the German submarine U-132 had detected these ships and maneuvered to a favorable position to attack. The U-132 fired a spread of torpedoes at the Alexander Hamilton. One torpedo struck the Alexander Hamilton on the starboard side between the fireroom and the engine room. Unknown to many Americans, this is how many of my brother Engineers die in combat.

The Alexander Hamilton was fatally wounded. The explosion wrecked the engine room and the fire room, initially killing seven men and burning and injuring many others. The cutter immediately lost way and settled 4 feet in the water but was counter-flooded to trim the vessel. Fearing that the submarine might fire another torpedo, abandon ship orders were given.

Thirty minutes after the attack, four boats began transferring the injured and some of the crew to the Gwinn. Three Icelandic fishing trawlers, responding to the distress signals, also assisted the "Hamiltons". The torpedo claimed 26 lives, including 6 who later died of burns. While attempting to rescue the damaged cutter, as many as 14 destroyers from the nearby base at Hvalfjordur searched unsuccessfully for the U-132.

The cutter remained afloat. That evening the British tug Restive tried for two hours to take the Alexander Hamilton in tow.

The Frisky returned from Reykjavik after towing the Yukon and joined the ex-Coast Guard tug Redwing and the Restive in the attempt to save the cutter.

Under tow by the Frisky on 30 January the cutter listed further and extremely bow high, prompting the Navy's U.S.S. Erickson to end her life, sending her to her final resting place in 40 fathoms of water, 28 miles off Iceland's coast.

Semper Paratus

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
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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Unexpected Beauty

Tracey and I prefer the views and vistas earned by placing one boot in front of the other. The way our old old hickory tree wears the seasons surpasses almost any view through a windshield. Nevertheless, we ventured out recently to drive about the northern part of our state.

This is one of my favorite times of year here. The leaf-looking traffic is gone. There is a lull-between-the-holidays peacefulness that reminds longtime residents of days gone by. There is unexpected beauty still clinging to nooks and crannies, and the mountains uncovered reveal once again their majesty, and hidden beauty, and the power of the hand that formed them.

As much as I have written about the hazards of petroleum-based civilization, I am not immune to that uniquely American enjoyment in the sense of freedom and self-mastery that comes from the open road. There is nothing as liberating and nothing as American as piloting a vehicle where we want, when we want. From horse and buggy to wagon train, railroad to Interstate, the appetite for movement is written into our history and ingrained in our culture. We came by that longing honestly, long before we were told that everything we do must be counted in a cost of carbon.

We enjoyed our trip, the fresh air, the smattering of fall color in the highlands, the quaint roadside shops, a homemade cinnamon bun with a bad cup of coffee and a winning smile from the proprietor. The overcast day was drawn like a blanket over the soft grays and muted colors of the highlands, as if the mountains were taking an afternoon nap, dreaming of holly berries and hoarfrost.

The occasional shaft of sunlight made brilliant by the somber silver and slate sky created a sense of expectation over the next hill and around the next bend. It was a gentle day, a sleepy day, a day that hinted of changes to come, inspired thoughts of the axe and the woodpile, and suggested a pot of chili bubbling on top of the wood stove.

We thoroughly enjoyed our dappled gray day in the highlands. It was a memorable day for us. Sadly, our contentment was not shared by a couple we overheard at a local shop who had driven all this way only to be disappointed by the failure of the foliage to perform to their expectations.

For them, there was nothing worth photographing, and the weekend was ruined.

Surrounded by the sounds of water falling on rocks and the music of a mandolin playing in the background, immersed in the smell of caramel apples and hot boiled peanuts and in plain sight of an array of pumpkins that would have been the envy of any backyard gardener, these unhappy travelers grumbled and poked their discontent into the ubiquitous little boxes to which most of us are now attached. They headed for home, annoyed at having no colorful pictures to post to prove to their friends what a wonderful time they were having, oblivious to the subtle beauty all around them.

For many of us now, expectation often exceeds experience, and when this becomes habitual, we are destined for disappointment.

A virtual world of idealized images and intensity now stands between us and direct experience, burdening our perspective with unattainable goals. Our species has been staring at screens for over a generation now: big screens at the theater, screens in the living room and the bedroom, and the bathroom; screens at work and screens in our pockets. Advertisers have always asked us to compare our lives to what we saw on those screens and now, we do it without their prompting. In a final surrender to the virtual, we weigh our own idealized projections against those of our "friends."

Are we losing our ability to perceive reality with our own native senses? Are the idealized images enhanced by technology muting the colors of everything else?

Will our need for the intense and the instantaneous lead us ever onward into the undiscovered territory of the virtual world, where happiness and contentment are entirely dependent on technology – and marketing? What will we do when the power goes out or the battery dies?

I don't know, but I can smell that pot of chili on the stove. I suppose I could post a picture of it, but I would much rather spoon it up.

Outside The Box
By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Organic, Hybrid & Heirloom

A couple of weeks ago I wrote an article on GMOs. This week I'm going to talk about a few more groupings that we make. I want to talk about what these names really mean, or don't mean, so that you can make educated decisions when shopping, or selecting what you're going to grow in your garden. This week I want to talk about organic, hybrid, and heirloom.



Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

In the US to advertise a product as organic or to put the USDA Organic label on a product, you must go through a lengthy certification process.

You must be able to prove that your product was made without a long list of synthetic products. To call something 100% Organic that product must have 100% organic ingredients.

To call it Organic, it must contain a minimum of 95% organic ingredients. To say that something is Made with Organic, it must have at least 70% of its ingredients organic. A product that says it contains Organic Ingredients does not require certification.

The USDA has a lot of regulations about the word organic, and becoming certified organic is not an easy process. Even once you are certified, you must pass periodic inspections to remain certified. Because of this, many products will use the terminology naturally grown, sustainable, locally grown, or other phrases. Usually, these words have a lot less regulation and certification required to use them.

The term hybrid is used to describe seeds. Hybrid seeds are a cross between two parents with desirable traits to create an offspring that has the best of both sides. Those desirable traits could be flavor, disease or insect resistance, yield increase, color, or any number of other things.

Hybrids have great uniformity, meaning that as they grow that hybrid looks the same, and will come ready to harvest at the same time. Hybrids can be organic. They can be GMO. Most hybrids are conventionally bred, meaning they are not genetically engineered.

Hybrids are a great option for your garden, because they come with so many benefits.

The drawback to hybrids is that if you save the seed from them, they won't grow into plants that look like the previous generation. If you want to have the same hybrid year after year, you have to buy the seed. Hybrids started to become more popular in the 1950s. Before hybrids, everyone planted heirlooms.

Heirlooms don't have a strict definition. Typically, people think heirlooms are plant varieties that have been around for a long time. However, this is not always the case. Heirlooms are open-pollinators. This means that you will have a lot more variability in what the plant looks like.

They also will usually have less insect or disease resistance than hybrids do, making them more difficult to grow. Heirlooms help to preserve genetic diversity and connect us to the past, because the seeds carry the same genetics that generations before have planted.

If you have questions about seeds or gardening contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.williams@uga.edu.

Habitat is in the Christmas Spirit

Thanks to everyone who came to the Courthouse on the Square on Saturday, for our first "Christmas Present Wrapping Event". In case you missed it, shoppers could bring their purchases to the Courthouse on Saturday, 11/27, from 11 AM -3 PM, and Habitat volunteers would wrap up their purchases, in exchange for a donation. A great time was had by all, and we have plans to make this an annual event!



Habitat Happenings
Cathy Wheeler

The Union County Chamber of Commerce encourages its members to decorate a tree at the Community Center (up by the golf course). Our Habitat Affiliate always participates in this, and this year is no different.

Thanks to Donna Towery, one of our faithful volunteers, for helping create many of the ornaments on Habitat's tree, and taking the time to put it all together. It's so cute! The ornaments are in the shape of tools and houses, and it has a hard hat for a tree-topper! Be sure and stop by and browse the many trees displayed by our local businesses, and get into the Holiday Spirit!

You have probably heard that we are in the process of collecting applications for our next Habitat House. Over the past month or so, we have held four orientation meetings, but if you missed them, it's still not too late!

If you know of anyone who might want to apply for our next Habitat House, please encourage that person to call our office at 706-745-7101, and someone will fill them in on what it takes to become a Habitat Homeowner. The deadline for applications is January 7, 2022, so there is still time to apply!

Habitat will have a float in the Blairsville Christmas Parade that starts at 6 PM on December 4. Also, before the parade, there will be all sorts of activities on the square, such as pictures with Santa Claus, the Lighting of the Christmas Tree, Christmas Caroling, and several arts and crafts project for kids. Habitat will have a table there, so bring your kiddos and they can make some Christmas ornaments to take home to hang on their Christmas Trees.

Have you ever thought about volunteering with us? We can always use the help! Of course, when we are in the middle of building a house, we always need volunteers to help do things like paint, build decks, lay flooring, do construction cleanup, and install landscaping, just to name a few things. However, we need volunteers for other things too! Our ReStore is open six days a week, and we would love to have you stop by when you can, and help our staff organize merchandise, price items, and help customers. We also have a project called "Helping Hands", where we do repairs for homeowners so they can stay in their homes—and we are always looking for volunteers for that.

There are also many small projects and events that we take on, not only to raise money, but also to raise awareness of our mission.

We would love to have your help, whether it's an "ongoing" thing, a once-in-a-while thing, or a "one-time" thing - if you have the time, we have the project! Call us (706-745-7101) or just stop by to see what we have going on, and how you can help.

Have something to sell?

Let the Herald work for you!
Contact us at 706-896-4454

Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM



Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

Kenneth West Owner/Publisher	Shawn Jarrard General Manager	Todd Forrest Staff Writer
Derek Richards Advertising Director	Shawn Henrikson Copy Editor	Lowell Nicholson Photographer

Publication No: 635540

Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$25. Out of County (1 Year) \$35. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. **Postmaster:** Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

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