

LAMENT for that 5-cent Cup of Coffee. (469 words)

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Today's public mindset seems oblivious to the cost of consumer commodities of past years, and perhaps rightfully so. It's all relevant to the rising cost of living and the lifestyle changes that provoke the wage-price spiral.

Nevertheless, a look back becomes startling when you realize yesteryears "5-cent CUP of coffee" is now \$3.00 a cup in some eateries - while gasoline prices now float from \$3.00 to \$4.00 a gallon. The price was once 10-cents a gallon.

Hardly world-shaking news, but these two commodities are closely ranked. Gasoline is a by-product of oil - and the world's two foremost commodities are oil and coffee. Among natural commodities, only oil has a monetary value that surpasses coffee. But each ranks notably in the world marketplace, before trickling down to gas-pumps and store-shelves

For centuries coffee-production has been the economic mainstay in dozens of countries, involving over 25 million people. The 18th century French statesman "Talleyrand" had an exotic description of coffee, "black as the devil, hot as hell - pure as an angel, sweet as love". Various trade organizations compile lists of the top coffee-producers with slight variations, but all unanimously rank BRAZIL as 'number one', producing one-third of the world's coffee at the best prices with fast shipping. Yet, the largest source of U.S. coffee-imports is fifth-place Mexico, which produces less than a quarter of Brazil's crop.

Coffee and Brazil have been linked for years, and even inspired a popular song. "The Coffee Song" made the CBS "Hit Parade" in November, 1946 for merely one week. It seemed to be swept-aside by another hit, "South America - Take it Away" (ironic title), which enjoyed a 13-week stay on the popular "Hit Parade". Nevertheless, Frank Sinatra recorded "The Coffee Song" - way back when it was a nickel-a-cup..

After 65 years, the song was reprised during a performance for the Players Guild last July in Leisure Village. Harold Brodsky's production of "Brazil" evolved into a unique love story staged against the country's scenic background and music. The lyrics to "The Coffee Song" came alive again when Linda O'Neil sang, "Way down among Brazilians coffee beans grow by the billions - and they've got a lot of cups to fill. Man, they've got a lot of coffee in Brazil". Did the M.C. mention the cost-per-cup?

Our intent is to lament the demise of the "5-cent cup of coffee" that once was - and equate its passing with the macro-economics that affect world-change. But the solution is elusive, enough to drive you to drink...coffee at \$3.00 a cup? Then, your car fumes as it guzzles gas priced far beyond \$3.00 a gallon. Whew - if you drink it, don't drive - and if you drive, brace yourself. Prices will stagger you.

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