

# TUPELO COUNTRY NEWS™

## THE WEWA NEWS™

*“The Good News Newspaper”*

WINTER EDITION >> No. 011-03-2025<< A FREE NEWSPAPER Take One!



### **Aleasha Hand Becomes Manager in Training Caroline Husband Retires After Decades of Service**

By Tom Wynn

The Centennial Bank in Wewahitchka recently completed a stunning remodel, with renovations spanning several months. The bank officially reopened its doors on October 9, 2024, unveiling a fresh new look both inside and out. Anderson Construction of NW Florida, a local contractor from the Panama City area, handled the renovations. If you haven't yet seen the building's interior, it's a visual delight that beautifully reflects the local community's charm and pride.

On December 13, Mrs. Caroline Husband retired after decades of devoted service to the bank and the community. Mrs. Husband began her career at the original Wewa Bank as a high school student. Over the years, she rose through the ranks to become Assistant Branch Manager and later Bank President. She faithfully served the community through multiple ownership changes, becoming a beloved and respected figure. Her retirement closes an incredible chapter, leaving behind a legacy of commitment that will not be forgotten. (Taking on a leadership role in the remodeled bank is Ms. Aleasha Hand,  
(Story continues on page 2)



### **AMERICA GETS A FRESH START!**

By Tom Wynn

This American Flag flies tall in our Neighborhood on Chipola Ave. Mr. Rudy Madrid is the proud owner of this beauty. Every time I drive by daily, I am so proud of our Country that I served for over 20 years. I promise you; I have never been to a more loving country or place than Wewahitchka Florida, USA. Thank you, Rudy! With a New Government and a New Year, we have yet another opportunity to be better, more loving, and more caring about each other and our nation.

### **Celebrating 39 Years of Service: Ms. Kathy Adams' Retires from Emerald Coast Credit Union**

by Tom Wynn

After an impressive 39 years of dedicated service to the Wewahitchka community, Ms. Kathy Adams is retiring from her role as Bank Manager at Emerald Coast Credit Union. Throughout her tenure, Ms. Adams has been a cornerstone of the community, always going above and beyond to serve the members with warmth, efficiency, and professionalism.

Ms. Adams was known for her quick and reliable assistance, providing members with up-to-date information. (Story continues on page 2)

**(Adams retires from page 1 continues)** Whether it was over the phone or in person, she could be counted on to answer questions with precision and a smile, even in high-pressure moments, such as when members were on mission trips and needed urgent financial advice.

Her perpetual smile and positive attitude made every visit to the bank a joyful experience. Members always felt welcomed and supported by Kathy's warmth, which was reflected in the helpfulness and accuracy of her team. Kathy taught her cashiers not only the technical aspects of their jobs but also how to interact with members in a way that left everyone feeling better than when they walked in.

No matter the challenges a member faced, whether financial or personal, Kathy ensured they left the credit union with a sense of accomplishment and a smile on their face. Her dedication to providing excellent customer service has shaped the culture of Emerald Coast Credit Union for nearly four decades.

As Kathy enters retirement, the community can rest easy knowing that her legacy of outstanding service will continue. Ms. Gwen McGill, who has been promoted to Branch Manager, is well equipped to carry forward Kathy's tradition of excellence. The members of Emerald Coast Credit Union are in good hands, and Kathy leaves with the gratitude and admiration of all those she has served over the years.

Thank you, Ms. Kathy Adams, for your 39 years of exceptional service, and best wishes for a fulfilling retirement! Your contributions will be missed, but your impact will always remain. **TW**

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**(Aleasha Hand-Bank Manager from Page 1)** who has been promoted to Assistant Branch Manager and Manager in Training. Known for her radiant smile and cheerful demeanor, Ms. Hand ensures every customer feels welcomed and valued.

The remodeled bank is more than just a place for financial services—it's also a celebration of local pride. Mrs. Courtney Gaskin captured the beautiful photographs now displayed throughout the bank lobby, showcasing the Wewahitchka area's charm and character. Mrs. Jan Traylor lovingly placed these photographs on the walls, creating an inviting and personalized atmosphere. Customers can now enjoy

the stunning décor while conducting their banking, making every visit a pleasant experience.

With its refreshed appearance, dedicated staff, and strong leadership under Ms. Hand, Centennial Bank is prepared to serve Wewahitchka with excellence. Stop by to see the exciting updates and enjoy the welcoming atmosphere!

Congratulations to Mrs. Caroline Husband on her well-earned retirement and to Ms. Aleasha Hand as she begins this exciting new chapter in her career! **TW**



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## **THE WEWA NEWS CELEBRATES GULF COUNTY 100 YEARS IN POEM**

**by Grandpa Tom**

In Wewahitchka, where cypress trees stand tall, And  
the Dead Lakes whisper tales to all, old paddle boats  
once danced upon the waves, Navigating North  
Florida's river basins, brave.

In June, a century of Gulf County's cheer, as we  
gather 'round, both far and near, Fishing lines cast in  
waters clear and bright, Underneath the golden  
Florida sunlight.

Hunting stories shared by firelight's glow, as  
friendships flourish, and laughter flows, in this land  
of Tupelo Honey sweet, Where the Tupelo Honey  
Festival we greet. With family bonds as strong as the  
ancient oak, we cherish moments shared in love's  
evoke, from sunrise to sunset, in this paradise, our  
hearts unite, our spirits rise.

## GULF COUNTY'S FIRST COUNTY COMMISSION AND JUDGE

Gulf County, Florida, was established on June 6, 1925. The first Board of County Commissioners included the following Gentlemen:

- **Chairman J.J. McDaniel, H.E. Rish, S.F. Van Horn, A.D. Lawson, G.A. Patton, W.L. Mowbray:** The initial county seat was Wewahitchka, where the first courthouse was constructed in 1927. This courthouse served the county until the seat was moved to Port St. Joe in 1965. **Links:** [Home Movie Database](#)

The first county judge was **E.C. Lewis Jr.**, appointed on July 30, 1925. [Florida Memory](#) These early officials played a crucial role in establishing Gulf County's governance and infrastructure.

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### HISTORICAL PERIODICALS BY TOM WYNN

Two historical periodicals by the Wewahitchka Historical Society and Friends of The Library are on sell at the Wewa Library. So, look for them and pick up a copy for a donation of \$5.00 each. Please contact the library to share historical information for the centennial.

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### Places to See and Visit in North Florida for Locals to Enjoy

by Tom Wynn

If you live in Wewahitchka, Florida, you're surrounded by amazing places to visit that make great day trips. Whether you're a senior looking for a peaceful day out or a young family searching for adventure, North Florida has something for everyone. From caverns to historic lighthouses, here are some wonderful spots you can visit, all within about 100 miles of Wewahitchka.

**1. Florida Caverns State Park Location:** 3345 Caverns Rd, Marianna, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 45 miles east Florida Caverns State Park is a hidden gem, offering tours of stunning limestone caves. You'll explore the dark, cool caverns with stalactites and stalagmites. There's also hiking, picnicking, and a spring-fed swimming area. It's a great spot for seniors and families to enjoy nature and history.

**2. Port St. Joe Lighthouse Location:** 200 1st St, Port St. Joe, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 20 miles south A visit to the Port St. Joe Lighthouse will take you back in time. The lighthouse, built in 1827, is the perfect place for a history lesson and offers incredible views



of the Gulf of Mexico. You can climb to the top and enjoy the scenery, making it a great spot for family photos or a relaxing walk.

**3. St. Joseph Peninsula State Park Location:** 8899 Cape San Blas Rd, Port St. Joe, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 25 miles south  
This park is perfect for anyone who loves the beach. The white sandy beaches and crystal-clear waters are perfect for swimming, picnicking, or just relaxing. It's also a great spot for birdwatching and nature walks. St. Joseph Peninsula State Park is a peaceful escape for seniors and families looking to unwind.

**4. Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park Location:** 13599 Perdido Key Dr, Pensacola, FL

**Distance from Wewahitchka:** 90 miles west  
Tarkiln Bayou Preserve is a beautiful place for nature lovers. It has boardwalks that lead through the wetlands, making it easy to spot wildlife, such as birds, fish, and even alligators. It's a peaceful park for seniors to take a relaxing walk or for families to explore nature.

**5. Apalachicola Riverfront Park Location:** 1 Avenue E, Apalachicola, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 30 miles east  
Take a relaxing stroll along the Apalachicola Riverfront Park. The park offers a beautiful view of the river, benches to sit and relax, and a walking path. It's perfect for a laid-back afternoon and gives families and seniors a chance to enjoy the fresh air and scenic views.

**6. Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory Location:** 222 Clark Dr, Panacea, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 60 miles east  
If you love marine life, the Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory in Panacea is a must-see. It offers visitors the chance to explore local marine creatures, from starfish to sea turtles. It's educational and fun for all ages, making it a great stop for both seniors and kids.

**7. Econfinia Creek Canoe Launch Location:** 4032 Econfinia Creek Rd, Washington County, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 30 miles north  
If you enjoy outdoor adventure, consider kayaking or canoeing down Econfinia Creek. This creek is a great spot for families and seniors who enjoy peaceful waters and beautiful surroundings. The area is quiet and perfect for a leisurely day out on the water.

**8. Historic Apalachicola Location:** Apalachicola, FL  
**Distance from Wewa:** 30 miles east

The charming town of Apalachicola offers visitors a chance to step back in time. You can visit the historic district, with its beautiful 19th-century homes, shops, and restaurants. Take a walk along the streets, enjoy a seafood meal, or shop for unique antiques. Apalachicola is a great spot for history buffs and anyone looking for a quaint, small-town experience.

**9. Carrabelle Beach Location:** Carrabelle, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 60 miles west  
Carrabelle Beach is a peaceful, less crowded beach spot perfect for a relaxing day by the Gulf. The soft sand and calm waters make it ideal for families with young children or seniors looking to enjoy the sunshine and waves. Bring a picnic, relax, and take in the natural beauty.

**10. Naval Aviation Museum Location:** 1750 Radford Blvd, Pensacola, FL

**Distance from Wewa:** 90 miles west  
The **National Naval Aviation Museum** is one of the largest aviation museums in the world, offering an exciting and educational experience for all ages. Inside, you'll find over 150 aircraft, including historic planes and modern jets. The museum also features interactive exhibits, a flight simulator, and the **Blue Angels Atrium**, where you can learn about the famous Navy flight demonstration squadron.

For me, this museum holds a special place. As a young aviation petty officer, I had the honor of driving my Commanding Officer (CO) to the ceremony for the grand opening of the museum. Later, as a Senior Chief about to retire, I was flown in by my CO for the 20th-anniversary event. It was a true full-circle moment, and it always reminds me of the pride and history that surrounds our nation's military aviation.

I could go on and tell more stories, but you really need to experience it yourself. Take your kids and go—it's a wonderful place that captures true American history and is a must-see for anyone interested in aviation and history military. **TW**

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**ROMANS 15:6-7**

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### Visit to Florida Caverns State Park

by Jo Ellen Campbell

Saturday morning, October 19, 2024, Harvey and Jo Ellen Campbell accompanied Tom Wynn to the Florida Caverns State Park. Florida Caverns State Park has several areas for camping for both tents and RVs. There are picnic areas with shaded pavilions, complete with charcoal grills.

The park includes part of the Chipola River. There is a boat launch. There is a large fishing dock. There is also a swimming hole called the Blue Hole, as the sun reflects off the white sand at the bottom, making the water look blue. Swimming is allowed without a lifeguard, and a warning to watch out for possible crocodiles.

Their tour guide was Jack, a junior in high school. When Jo Ellen talked to him after the tour, he said that he worked on Saturdays and went to church on Sundays. The group enjoyed going through the caverns, and meeting people from all over the US. Various areas were lit with colored lights that set the rock formations off.

Jack showed us one room that fills up with water when there is a lot of rain. Tours may stop until the water goes back down.

Jack asked the group what we thought were the most numerous animals in the cave. We spoke of bats, and he

said no, not bats, but ducks. Someone asked: "are there really ducks in the cave?"

Jack said you must "duck" a lot in the caves.

Some areas had beautiful stalactites, and some other ones even had columns where the stalactites and stalagmites joined. One formation looked like Java the Hut, and another looked like a wedding cake. There are even some rock formations that look like curtain folds.

The tour lasted about an hour. I suspect, that some go longer and some shorter depending on the interest various people have in the formations. JC



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## **THE WEWA LIBRARY**

### **The History of Our Modern Local Library**

by Joyelle Linton

Happy New Year from the  
Wewahitchka Public Library!

Did you know that library cards are free to residents? Stop by and check out our new selection of books and movies that are arriving! If you prefer to listen to an audiobook or read an eBook, check out our Libby app. Free computer use, and WIFI are offered. Notary services are available with a donation.

Our library, the Friends of the Wewahitchka Library and the Wewahitchka Historical Society have been busy preparing for the celebration of Wewahitchka's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the County's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is such an exciting time for our community! Mark your calendar for this free family event on Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup> from 9:00-3:00 pm CT. It will be located at the library, the surrounding grounds and the courthouse grounds. There will be food and craft vendors, music, fun for the kids, demonstrations, speakers, exhibits and much more. Help us spread the word!

Do you have photographs of local events, businesses or places? How about the bicentennial celebration from 1975? If you have any photos that you would like to share with the library, we ask that you call and make an appointment. Your photos will be scanned and given back to you at that time. Your photos may be used in our exhibits, which we are currently working on.

The Wewahitchka Library is partnering with the Wewahitchka Historical Society to make a community memory quilt in honor of this celebration. It will be on display at the event. This is a fundraiser that will support the Wewahitchka Historical Society and the Wewahitchka Library's sewing programs. The funds will purchase supplies to make the quilt and then any additional funds would be divided between the two. \$10.00 donations for a name strip and \$15.00 for a square for multiple names. Would you like your family name on the quilt? Do you know how to embroidery? Do you need a refresher? Have you never learned? We plan to have several workshops at the Wewahitchka Library and the Wewahitchka Senior Center to assist

you. If you are skilled in this craft, we invite you to work on yours at home, if you prefer.

For additional information or questions, please contact us at (850) 639-2419. Our library hours are Mondays 9-1, Tuesdays 9-5, Thursdays 9-5, Fridays 9-5 and Saturdays 9-1.

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## **100th Anniversary of Gulf County: Honoring a Legacy of Service and Community**

*By Tom Wynn*

*Wewahitchka, Florida* – As we celebrate our county's 100th anniversary, the people of Wewa are reflecting on a rich history marked by resilience, community spirit, and dedicated leadership. Among the many figures who have shaped the town, one name stands out: Ray Dickens, the beloved mayor who served the community for over two decades.

Born in Sumrall, Mississippi, Ray Dickens moved to Wewahitchka in 1968 and quickly became an integral part of the local community. A veteran of the U.S. Army and a successful businessman, Dickens took on the role of mayor in 1989, where he dedicated himself to the service of his fellow citizens for 22 years. Known for his unwavering commitment to the people of Wewahitchka, Dickens was instrumental in bringing people together, hosting numerous community events, and championing local development projects.

Dickens' legacy continues to live on through an annual event that has become a cherished tradition in the city. Every year, to honor his memory, the City of Wewahitchka hosts a free Fish Fry for the public, a tribute to Mayor Dickens' love for his community and his tradition of serving others. The event is cooked by city employees and is overseen by the current Mayor, Phillip Gaskin.

"We owe a lot to Mayor Dickens," said Mayor Gaskin. "His leadership and dedication to the people of Wewahitchka left a lasting mark on this town. The Fish Fry is just one way we can honor his memory and bring our community together each year."

As Gulf County marks its 100th year, leaders like Ray Dickens remind us of the importance of community, dedication, and the power of local service. **TW**

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**Have you hugged your neighbors lately?  
Mark, Matthew and Leviticus 19:18**

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**IF you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to find you guilty?**

### **BIBLE STUDY TOOLS**

**If you are interested in using Bible study tools online for free, check this website out:**

[www.esb.bible](http://www.esb.bible)

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**Check out our new website: myWEWA.org**

Created for you by my son Aaron Wynn



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### **“Tupelo Radio Group” COME JOIN US!**

**In case you didn’t know: “The Tupelo Radio Group”** is making a GMRS Radio network where the repeaters are to be located has yet to be determined.

Every Sunday at 4 PM we have a radio check to make sure our radios are working and charged up in case of a need. We are looking for some ham operators in the Wewa area to join us. If anyone is interested in joining the group, please

Contact: **Mr. Dudley Balmer at: 317-379-1644.**  
(Radioddity email address: [www.radioddity.com](http://www.radioddity.com))

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## **Dealing with Bullies with Wisdom and Compassion**

*by Grandpa Tom Wynn*

In life, dealing with bullies is never easy, whether in school, at work, or anywhere else. During my military career, I often encountered bullies who used their power or position to control others. Instead of fighting back with anger, I took a different approach: I would take each bully aside, in private, and have a straightforward talk with them. I quietly asked them some hard questions about their behavior—questions that made them think.

I wanted them to see how their actions were affecting not only the people around them but also their own

reputation and career. When I showed them that their behavior was shameful, lacked true leadership, and could eventually harm their own career, something often clicked. Sometimes, they walked away with a new respect for themselves, and other times, I’d gained a new friend. My approach didn’t involve harsh words or threats; it was just a calm, honest conversation that allowed them to see themselves in a new light.

### **Compassion and Forgiveness in Action**

One thing I’ve learned is that many bullies were bullied themselves. Often, the reason they act this way is because they don’t know any other way to behave, especially if they feel they need to keep up a “tough” image because of their power or position. This is where compassion comes into play. We are called to “love others” (Matthew 22:39), and it’s easy to do that when people are kind to us. But loving those who dislike us, or even those who hurt us, requires maturity, wisdom, and a strong heart.

When we choose to forgive, it doesn’t only help the other person; it heals both parties. Love, as the Bible says, “covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). By showing kindness to those who mistreat us, we can actually help them begin to change. Not every bully will become a friend, but many will realize that their actions are not right and start to respect you.

### **When Talking Doesn’t Work**

Of course, not every situation can be handled one-on-one. If you’ve tried to speak with someone privately and it hasn’t worked, there’s nothing wrong with seeking help. In the military, we had the “chain of command,” a way of going to someone higher up when there was a problem we couldn’t solve alone. You can do the same. If you’re in school, talk to a teacher, counselor, or principal. If it’s at work, go to a supervisor or manager. Make sure they know the efforts you’ve already made to handle things respectfully. And remember, document everything in case it’s needed later.

Sometimes, just knowing you’re not alone can make a big difference. People in authority often want to help, but they need to know what’s happening. So don’t be afraid to reach out, whether it’s to a parent, teacher, or someone else in charge. Asking for help isn’t a sign of weakness; it’s a sign of wisdom.



## Be Kind, So You Don't Have to Rewind

One of the most valuable lessons I learned is to always treat others with respect, even when they don't do the same. There's a saying, "Be kind, so you don't have to rewind." When we handle situations with kindness and grace, we don't have to worry about regretting our words later. Speak calmly and clearly, without insults or anger. That way, even if things don't go as planned, you can look back with a clear conscience.

In everything, seek advice, especially in private if possible, and pray about it. When we bring our challenges to God, we find peace, wisdom, and guidance. Handling bullies with love and respect might not be easy, but it's always the right path. Remember, even small acts of kindness can have a big impact. Treating others with patience and understanding helps build a world where everyone feels respected, valued, and loved. **TW**

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## HISTORICAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN GULF COUNTY- A Series...

### Michael Hammond: A Legacy of Community Service in Gulf County

by Tom Wynn

In keeping with the history of Gulf County, this year marks our 100th anniversary as a Florida county, founded on June 6, 1925. In 1927, the new courthouse with a angled floor in the courtroom was completed in Wewahitchka. Later, in 1964, Gulf County residents voted to move the county seat from Wewahitchka to Port St. Joe, and the transition was completed in 1965, with the new Gulf County Courthouse in Port St. Joe opening that year.

Michael Hammond's name is synonymous with dedicated public service in Gulf County, Florida. At just 18 years old, he made history by becoming the youngest county commissioner in Florida, a testament to his early commitment to his community. His remarkable journey has spanned three decades, with numerous roles and responsibilities that have shaped Gulf County's development and future.

#### Early Life and Political Beginnings

Born and raised in White City, on Highway 71 south, a small community in Gulf County, Michael was immersed in civic life from a young age. He

accompanied his father to volunteer fire department meetings and engaged in local discussions, which helped him develop a deep understanding of community dynamics. His passion for politics was evident early on; he managed a sheriff's campaign at 14 and joined the volunteer fire department at 16. In 1992, Michael's dedication culminated in his election to the Gulf County Commission. His campaign, centered on honesty and integrity, resonated with voters. His swearing-in ceremony was attended by community members, all proud of his achievement.

#### Contributions to Gulf County

Over the years, Michael Hammond has served in a wide range of positions, each contributing significantly to Gulf County's growth. In addition to his work as a county commissioner, he has held roles such as County Sheriff, Building Inspector, and is currently serving as the County Administrator.

Throughout his career, Hammond has been particularly focused on public safety, education, and fostering economic opportunities for local businesses and residents. His background in the volunteer fire department provided him with unique insights into community needs, allowing him to advocate effectively for resources and policies that benefited his constituents.

#### Legacy

Michael Hammond's three decades of service have left an indelible mark on Gulf County. His journey from a young political enthusiast to a respected county commissioner and beyond exemplifies the impact of dedicated public service. Even though he may be nearing retirement, there's no telling what the future has in store for Michael Hammond. His story continues to inspire future generations to engage in community affairs and public service. **TW**

**Sources:** "Never too young to be a politician." *Tampa Bay Times*, November 27, 1992. [tampabay.com](http://tampabay.com) "Gulf County History." *Florida Memory*, [floridamemory.com](http://floridamemory.com) "History of Gulf County." *Digital Commons*, University of North Florida, [digitalcommons.unf.edu](http://digitalcommons.unf.edu)

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# **100 Years Celebration of Gulf County: A Transformation into Paradise**

by Tom Wynn

For the first 100 years of Gulf County and surrounding counties' history, the region was defined by the grit and grind of industry. It was a place where hard work was synonymous with long hours, difficult labor, and the hum of heavy machinery. The air carried the smells of chemicals and factory processes, and life revolved around the schedules set by large industries. But over the past 50 years, Gulf County has undergone a remarkable transformation—one that has taken it from an industrial powerhouse to a haven for peace, natural beauty, and community-oriented living.

## **The Industrial Past: A Hardworking Heritage**

Gulf County's early years were rooted in industry. From lumber mills to the turpentine factories that dotted the landscape, the county was a place where workers toiled long hours, often under difficult conditions. Large machines hummed day and night, the air filled with the scents of chemicals, sawdust, and heavy labor. The focus was on productivity, and life was shaped by factory schedules and the demands of industrial growth.

The towns of Gulf County—particularly Wewahitchka—were once known for their labor-intensive economy. People worked hard, but often at a cost. The pay was meager, the hours were grueling, and the working conditions were less than ideal. These industries brought with them not just physical work but also the strains of dependency on company-owned stores, where workers would buy goods with scrip instead of real money. The landscape was shaped by factories, machines, and the needs of a system designed to churn out products for the wider world.

## **The Shift: A New Era of Peace and Beauty**

As time went on, the industries that once dominated the county began to wane. The sawmills closed, the turpentine industry slowed, and with it, the chemical smells and loud machinery that had characterized life for generations. What emerged in its place was a transformation that was nothing short of remarkable.

Gulf County slowly began to reinvent itself as a place of natural beauty, quiet serenity, and community connection. The heavy machinery gave way to peaceful sounds: the chirping of birds, the rustling of

trees in the wind, and the gentle flow of rivers and lakes that had long been the backdrop of daily life. The landscape, once scarred by industry, began to heal. People who had lived through years of hard labor were finding new ways to live and work, centered around the natural beauty that surrounded them.

The county became a place not just for work, but for vacation, relaxation, and building relationships. With its pristine beaches, lush forests, and the clear waters of the Dead Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico, it attracted people looking for an escape from the stress and bustle of city life. Wewahitchka, Port St. Joe, and the surrounding communities began to shift their focus from industry to tourism, outdoor recreation, and fostering a quality of life that balanced work with relaxation.

## **A New Way of Living**

Today, Gulf County has blossomed into a haven for retirees, young families, and those seeking a slower pace of life. The chemical plants and noisy factories have been replaced with charming homes, boutique businesses, and vibrant communities where people are more likely to hear the sounds of laughter than the whir of machinery.

People are discovering the joy of living in a place where they can take in the beauty of nature each day. Local wildflowers paint the landscape with color, and the air is fresh with the scent of pine and salty ocean breezes. Visitors and residents alike are drawn to the unique taste of locally produced **Tupelo Honey**, which captures the essence of the land in every spoonful. The rich natural resources of the area are now a central part of the economy, and Gulf County is celebrated for its organic beauty and peaceful lifestyle.

Rather than spending long hours in factories or dealing with the harsh demands of industrial work, people now focus on relationships, community, and wellness. Families are raising their children in neighborhoods where the air is clean and the environment is a playground. There's a renewed focus on education, with children growing up to become doctors, nurses, teachers, government employees, and entrepreneurs who are dedicated to improving the community.

## **The Promise of a Better Future**

What fills me with pride as a longtime resident of Wewahitchka is the young people who have grown up

in this new environment. These are the same kids who once played in the woods and swam in the lakes, but now they are our future. They are becoming the doctors who care for us, the nurses who heal us, the teachers who guide our children and great grandchildren, and the business owners who shape our economy.

It's an incredible transformation to see these young people take on roles of responsibility and leadership, creating a new future for Gulf County—one that is bright, promising, and full of hope. They are building a community that values hard work, but also understands the importance of balance, relationships, and quality of life. I am proud to know that these young adults are not just surviving but thriving in the environment we've worked so hard to create.

### **A Historian's Perspective**

As a historian, a Coast Guardsman, and someone who has spent his life saving lives and running various businesses, I have seen the beautiful transformation of our county firsthand. The change that Gulf County has undergone, from a tough industrial heartland to the peaceful, nature-filled community we now cherish, is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our people. Our schools and communities have worked tirelessly to produce young adults who are not only skilled in their trades but also carry with them the values of respect, integrity, and a deep love for this land and its community.

The morning, I woke up after retiring from the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater, I was awakened by a bird chirping in the tree next to my bedroom window. A big smile came over me as I thought, "I am truly home, thank God!" That moment confirmed for me that this place, this beautiful Gulf County, is where I belong.

### **The Centennial Celebration**

As we celebrate Gulf County's centennial, we can reflect on the prosperity that has emerged in our county. We have witnessed a deepening commitment to education, with schools turning out future leaders in every field. Our young people are moving forward as doctors, nurses, business owners, and public servants who will continue to ensure that Gulf County remains a beacon of success for generations to come.

While we have evolved and prospered, we still hold close to our roots—values built on community, faith,

and the belief that we are blessed to live in a place of such unparalleled natural beauty. In the heart of a tropical paradise, just minutes from all the modern conveniences of the world, Gulf County stands as a shining example of how to balance the beauty of nature with the needs of society.

We are truly blessed. Gulf County and its two cities—Wewahitchka and Port St. Joe—have done an outstanding job of adapting to the changing times, all while maintaining the traditions that make this place so special. Within 30 minutes, we have access to modern amenities, including one of the most powerful defense forces in the world—the U.S. Air Force.

As we look back on our rich history and forward to a bright future, we can take pride in knowing that we live in one of the most beautiful, peaceful, and prosperous places on Earth.

Thank God for Gulf County and the sweetest little city in Florida—Wewahitchka!

Happy 100th Anniversary Gulf County! Hope to see you at the Tupelo Festival, the local family reunion, the happiest day of the Year for Wewahitchka. **TW**

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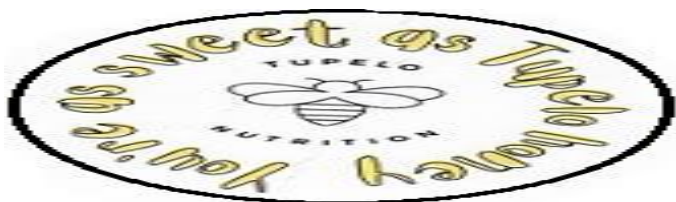
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**LEADERSHIP-Billy Traylor: A Proactive Leader  
and Beloved Public Servant in Gulf County,  
Florida**

By Tom Wynn

Billy Traylor is remembered as one of the most proactive and impactful public servants in Gulf County's history. His leadership as Mayor of Wewahitchka and as County Commissioner showcased his deep commitment to his community, his belief in the power of government, and his genuine care for the people he represented.

### A Champion of "We The People"

Billy Traylor grew up in the northern parts of Gulf County, where he developed a strong sense of community and a deep love for the area.

As a public servant, Traylor was a staunch believer in the principles of representative government. He cherished the idea of "We The People," ensuring that every voice in his district was heard and respected. He was well-loved by his constituents, who admired his approachable nature, integrity, and tireless work ethic.

### Proactive Leadership

During his tenure, Traylor was known for his hands-on approach to governance. Whether as Mayor of Wewahitchka or as County Commissioner, he sought practical solutions to the challenges facing Gulf County.

Traylor worked diligently to improve infrastructure, expand access to essential services, and foster economic growth. He believed in action and followed through on his promises, making a tangible difference in the lives of his constituents.

### A Beloved Figure in Gulf County

Over his decades of service, Traylor earned the respect and admiration of residents across Gulf County. He cared deeply for the people he represented, listening to their concerns and fighting for their needs. His legacy is marked by his unwavering dedication to bettering the lives of those around him.

### Gone Too Soon, but Never Forgotten

Tragically, Billy Traylor passed away shortly after being reelected to the district 2 County Commissioner seat, leaving a void in Gulf County's leadership for months. While he never had the chance to continue his work in his new term, his contributions to Gulf County remain an enduring testament to his love for his community and his proactive spirit.



## Honoring His Legacy

As Gulf County celebrates its centennial, Billy Traylor's memory serves as a beacon of what true public service should be. His leadership, belief in government, and care for "We The People" remain an inspiration for generations to come.

Billy Traylor's life reminds us of the power of service and the importance of leaders who listen, act, and care deeply for their community. He will always be remembered as a man who truly embodied the best of Gulf County. **TW**

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## INFORMATIONAL NOTICES

The Wewa News is a locally owned and operated local newspaper, created solely for the enjoyment of the people who live in the Wewa area. Our purpose is to bring "Good News" and "Whatever" to our locals' attention. I hope to bring back some joy and fun into our lives again and bring us closer than ever before. Thank you to those that support our efforts. The Wewa News operates in the Private. Freedom of speech and of the Press are fundamental to our effort of expression, as well as God given rights as men and women on the land called Florida. The Wewa News will be Published approximately 4 times a year, Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall Issues. Due to travel, family time, and health issues. I may decide to publish a Surprise, "Special Edition" occasionally. Thank you all for your support and positive feedback. The publishing of The Wewa News will be a periodical as of 1 January 2024 until further notice. We will notify the public via word of mouth and via Facebook pages the day it is published. Hard copies will be placed at Wewa Subway entrance and the City Library. **TW**

## Up Coming Events and Other: Mark Your Calendars

**The Local Bee Association** meets at 6pm Glad Tidings Assembly of God Church 138 E. Orange Ave. in Wewa meeting room in the far Eastside of the Church on the first Tuesday of each month at 6pm.

**The Friends of the Wewa Library's** meet at the Wewa Library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM. Come early and "Meet & Greet" with us in the conference room.

**Wewahitchka Historical Society** meets every month on the Third Thursday at 6pm at the Presbyterian Church in Hwy 71.

**City Hall Meetings:** The city meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month sharply at 6PM CT, unless posted otherwise. Contact the City Hall for possible changes due to weather or holidays.

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