



## OCTOBER WEWA COUNCIL MEETING FULL OF CITIZENS

by Tom Wynn

The City of Wewahitchka Counsel voted to approve the new RV and city clean-up ordinances 3 to 0. James Rish, Gene Hanlon and Tom Wynn spoke up with discussion and questions concerning both ordinances (See city website for verbiage of the Ordinances). Rish was concerned about the ordinance possibly of violating the property rights of the landowners, while Hanlon was concerned with the wording putting responsibility on the property owners having to maintain right of ways, which is the cities duties to take care of that (the ditches and edge of the road areas). The city lawyer had removed that verbiage after discussion about it in the last city meeting, they assured Mr. Hanlon. Chuck Johnson voiced his concern that this could become the beginning of property rights being walked all over by future city councils as he has experienced in the past.

Many Wewahitchkans do not like the new ordinances and have openly voiced their opinions on the two city ordinances passed. The Board stated that the process would have plenty of notices to the properties owners if there was an issue before any other action would be taken. The ordinances give the code enforcement officer of Gulf County, whom the city pays, to enforce the city ordinances on the property owners on behave of the City.

The mayor and the commissioners worked their way down each concern of those in the room, speaking up. Michael Gortman, the city manager, kept assuring those concerned that there would be plenty of warning notices before any action would be taken by the city. They, the City Council, kept repeating that we need to clean up the city and this was much needed to give some teeth to the process using the Gulf County Code Enforcement Officer. The G.C.C.E.O is paid by the city of Wewa each year. It is cheaper for the city to pay money to the County to do code enforcement then it is pay a city employee a full-time salary, the counsel said, during the discussion.

City website: [www.cityofwewahitchka.com](http://www.cityofwewahitchka.com) TW

## WEWA HISTORICAL GROUP HOOKS UP WITH THE LIBRARY

by Dianne Semmes

The Wewahitchka Historical Group held its monthly meeting on Thursday, October 21, 2021, at the Charles Whitehead Public Library. Our group was invited to the library by Mimi Minnick, Director of the Gulf County library system. James Jones was guest speaker. James grew up in Wewa but currently resides in Tennessee. He informed members about old Iola and the steamships that would bring supplies, as well as people, to the area. He stated that the some of the steamships were built out of cypress trees out of the Dead Lakes (the reason for the stumps in the Lake) which made them very sturdy.

Wewa was established in 1875, but unfortunately a fire destroyed the history records. Mimi welcomed everyone and held a discussion about how the library and the historical group could work together to educate interested people in the community about the history of Wewa and surrounding communities. There was a question-and-answer period which was very interesting and informative. Mimi shared with attendees' information about the upcoming Wewa History Day which will be held on Saturday, November 13, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

The entire community is invited and there will be exhibits, artifacts, free hot dogs and hamburgers, and other interesting activities. This event will be held at our local library. The next meeting for the Wewahitchka Historical Group will be on Thursday, November 18, 2021, 6:00 p.m., at the Corner Café. Our group seems to be growing each month and we welcome anyone in the community who has an interest in the history of Wewa area to join us. Member dues are: \$25.00 for an individual, and \$60.00 for a family. The meeting was adjourned by President Ann Mitchell. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month.  
DS

## OCTOBER FESTIVAL AT LAKE ALICE WAS A GREAT DAY!

October 2, 2021, went off without a hitch! Fun was had by all! I figure the number of folks were about 80 percent of the Tupelo Honey Festival, which made for a great day. All that I saw and talked to was happy to have the festival. The music was great. Tons of food as the lines never stopped from 9 am to 4 pm. No one ran out of food, but some ran out of Sweet Tea, the Southerner's Delight. Some folks went into Dee Tees when the word got out all the sweet tea was gone (just kidding folks!) Lake Alice Park was full of song and laughter and so beautiful. The city did a great job and those that worked hard for bring it about. A Saturday of fun for the whole family. The Cantu family and James Rish with son Nathan came out to sell Tupelo Honey. YUMMY! If you didn't make it, we missed you!  
TW

## HURRICANE MICHAEL

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2018, Hurricane Michael destroyed our homes and businesses, but it did not destroy our spirit of love and forgiveness. It just brought us closer together. Look for the blessings, but we must deal with the curses. Don't forget who is in charge, folks! Love U! 850 Strong! We have suffered a lot of pain, and yet we remain strong in spirit and love for one another and for our community in general. Please be kind to each other. We will continue to have hard times with situations. We can do well if we stay strong with each other in mind. May our Creator bless our coming days! Be watchful as we move into strange moments. Be ready for whatever comes our way. SEMPER PARATUS!

**THE WEWA WOMAN'S CLUB WORKS  
TOWARD VET PROJECT COMPLETION**

By Tom Wynn

As of this writing, the project is in progress. Please contact Ms. Laura Baxley at 850-819-5827 if you can help with donations. I personally have donated for 4 bricks, one for each family member who has lived or lives in Wewa area. I look forward to the day when we can go down to Lake Alice and read those names for many years to come. TW

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**LIFT UP WEWA!** And bring joy to someone today! Tell someone you love them, tell someone you care about them, tell someone you miss them. Lift our leaders up and pray for those that run our government. Be kind when others are not! Be joyful when you see your friends, for tomorrow they or you may be gone. Not to worry, He has your life in His hands. TW

The Wewa News is a locally owned and operated 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 effort with your support ads and help bringing our local news to the sweetest little city in Florida and its surrounding areas! Thank you, city workers and commissioners, for your care and hard work keeping us safe and running like a well-tuned machine. Also thank you Gulf County workers that keep our local parks clean and in nice condition, be of good cheer, we notice your effort! We know the work is long and hard, and we appreciate your labor of love for our beautiful parks and recreation areas. TW

**1 Peter 2:5**

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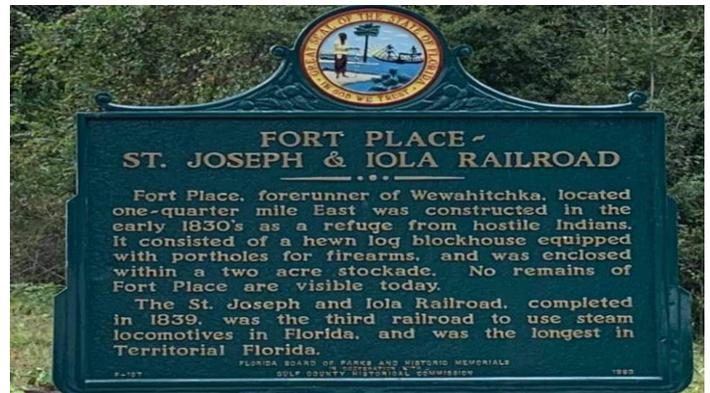
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Photo by Ann Johnson

Wewa News editor Tom Wynn and his best friend and neighbor, Chuck Johnson, look over a 1952 Gulf County Breeze. Both are amazed how cheap food prices were back then. “We will never see them prices again,” said Tom, “Can goods and other things were so DIRT CHEAP!”. President Ike was just elected President. I was not even born yet. The Wewa Library gave us all a gift of one old Breeze copy for being at the meeting. TW

### Gulf County Chamber News

Good News! The Gulf County Chamber of Commerce will carry copies of *The Wewa News* monthly in their Port St. Joe office, 321B Reid Ave, Port St. Joe, Florida, so that local businesses there will have access to the newspaper.

### HURRICANE MICHAEL HOUSING REPAIR & REPLACEMENT PROGRAM RebuildFlorida.gov · 888-530-3025

Visit a Rebuild Florida Center or one of our mobile pop-ups. DO YOU QUALIFY? If you owned and occupied your property at the time of Hurricane Michael AND you still own the property? Your household is income qualified? Your home still has documented and unrepaired damage from Hurricane Michael? IF YES, SEE THE WAYS TO APPLY by calling 888-530-3025 or go online at [RebuildFlorida.gov](http://RebuildFlorida.gov). The Rebuild Florida Housing Repair and Replacement Program is a state program launched with federal funding to repair, rebuild, or replace eligible homes with remaining damage from Hurricane Michael.

The Wewa News is missing something...

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I Corinthians 1:2

**HELP!** The Senior Citizen Center in Wewa needs folks to deliver lunch to house-bound seniors. **Please, if you can help, give Ms. Renece a call at: (850) 639-9910.** They are open weekdays 9 AM–2 PM. 60 and over eat free and under 60 eat for \$3.25. If you are eating, you must be there by 10:30 AM and they eat at 11:00 AM.

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1 Peter 1:22

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## WEWA'S FIREHOUSE

### Completion Date

Our brand new, shiny penny (\$1,126,000) of a firehouse is finally starting to look like a building, today it stands with bricks laid around the sides. Because of so many rain days, the construction crews have had a time getting the thing into place. Finally, it is starting to look like a building of large portions.

The Contractor came to the October city meeting to explain the delays, including one of his subcontractors passed away in the middle of the construction. As well as other things have delayed his crews to get the building done. He assured the city council and the Public, that were in the meeting, he is doing his best to complete the project. It may be time to pray for this man, as he has a lot of work to do, with little help, due to Covid-19. Materials are becoming harder to get to the job site, as well.

As they continue to build it, I will do my best to give updates of its progress. Commissioner Ralph Fisher, as well as, Mayor Phillip Gaskin have construction experience and they are keeping an eye on its construction process. Jack Husband and his co-workers have briefed the Commission and the Public at city meetings every month since the beginning of the project. They have done a great job keeping the city briefed on the progress.

Our city fathers are hard at work making sure that the construction is moving along and keeping an “eagle eye” on the cost change as well, as we talk often about its progress at each city meeting. With all said and done it should be completed by December 25, 2021 and paid in full. The move-in date is now approximately mid-January 2022. Thank you, Brian Cox for keeping a daily eye on the project as his Transmission Shop is right next door to the Fire station. Mr. Cox was not at the meeting, due to his father's passing. Ole' George Cox was a good man and will be sorely missed in our community. In the end Wewa did a good job on planning this project.

I hear many complaints about the tearing down of the old Fire station/City Hall. But most folks did not know is that the old building was not up to the modern codes for wheelchair access etc., lacked modernized plumbing, electrical and the concrete was falling apart, the Rebars were rusted and falling apart, too dangerous to stay up or keep it for any good purpose. FEMA money came at just the right time. The old building would have been condemned sooner or later. So, our City Fathers did the right thing and only has the City of Wewa at heart. I promise you that for sure!

TW

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1 Corinthians 3:16-17

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**The First Amendment of Your Constitution... Use it or lose it! Many died protecting it. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." TW**

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**THE CHARLES WHITEHEAD PUBLIC LIBRARY**

by Joyelle Linton – The Wewa Librarian



It is with great excitement that I share with you about an upcoming event at the Charles Whitehead Public Library. We will be hosting a Local History Day on Saturday, November 13, 2021, from 10-2 CT. This will be a free event for the whole family where we can share the wonderful history of Wewahitchka.

Visit your local library and check out all we have to offer. The library will be displaying our newly purchased books on Florida history and genealogy, donated Wewahitchka High School yearbooks, and collected Gulf County Breeze newspapers. Residents will be available to discuss artifacts currently on display at the library. A slide show will share the local photographs that have been collected, thus far. If you have not recently visited the library, we have purchased a collection of 10 framed prints representing Wewahitchka' history from the Florida Memory website. There will be fun door prizes, entertainment, crafts for the kids, and a free lunch will be provided. Due to COVID-19 the number of persons entering the library at one time will be limited and tents will be setup outside.

We are extremely excited about our collaboration with the University of Florida Digital Newspaper Library. A deadline has been set for October 15 for the final collection of the Gulf County Breeze. Please contact the library for more information on the years and issues needed. This wonderful newspaper was published from 1925-2013 but has never been digitized. Once digitized, anyone will be able to access the University of Florida website and access all the historic information they contain.

Beginning in September we began our Seed Library. It is off to a great start! Each person may receive 5 packs of seeds per

month with their library card. There are vegetables and wildflowers with the addition of herbs in the spring. This is a joint collaboration with the library, University of Florida Agricultural Extension office, and the Port St. Joe Garden Club. Our library is currently open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9-5 CT. **JL**

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## LOCAL HISTORY DAY

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**10:00-2:00 CT**

- Discover local artifacts from lola and the Chipola Cutoff & speak with the men who discovered these items
- Browse our newly added books on Florida history and genealogy
- Enjoy a slideshow of historic and local photographs
- View our collection of Wewahitchka High School Yearbooks Gulf County Breeze newspapers
- Learn about our plans for a local history exhibit

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**LOCAL KIDS ENJOY A TOUR OF THE LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS FIRE TRUCK AT THE LIBRARY IN WEWA.**

**BLAST FROM THE WEWA PAST!**

OLD, BUT APPROPRIATE

The Gulf County Breeze C. F. Hanlon, Editor and Owner  
Thursday, April 30, 1953, 5¢ Per copy

Submitted by Tom Semmes

Here is some sound advice for Americans which was delivered more than 150 (now 220) years ago, but which is still appropriate: Undertake not what you cannot perform but be careful to keep your promise. Be not hasty to believe flying reports to the disparagement of any. Let your discourse with men of business be short and comprehensive. Show not yourself glad at the misfortune of another, though he were your enemy. Speak not evil of the absent, for it is unjust. Mock not, nor jest at anything of importance; make no jests that are sharp-biting, and if you deliver anything witty and pleasant, abstain from laughing at yourself.

Be not angry at table, whatever happens, and if you have reason to be so, show not it; put on a cheerful countenance, especially if there be strangers, for good humor makes one dish of meat a feast. Detract not from others, neither be excessive in commending. When another speaks, be attentive yourself, and disturb not the audience. If any hesitate in his words, help him not, nor prompt him without being desired; interrupt him not, nor answer him, till his speech be ended. Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire, call conscience. (The man who delivered this advice was George Washington.) TS

**BIG NEWS!**

**New multi-million-dollar hospital coming to our area  
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See the list of local beekeepers with their phone numbers on the last page of this issue of the "The Wewa News."

**SAVE YOUR HISTORY! IF YOU WANT TO SAVE A HISTORICAL BUILDING OR ARTIFACT, THIS MAY HELP!**

**NATIONAL & FLORIDA GRANTS**

by Tom Wynn

In my research on saving some important buildings in Wewahitchka and our local area, I found the following grants via the U.S. Federal Government and the State of Florida as well. So, dig down deep and find some time to save something important to you and to your neighbors using these possible grants, Google these: 1. "National Historic Preservation Act of 1966" 2. "38 CFR Part 800-Protection of Historic Properties Incorporating amendments effective August 5, 2004" 3. "Save America's Treasures Grants" see the National Historic Preservation Act 54 USC 300101 4. The Dept. Of Historical Resources (a part of the Dept of State (FL) Special Cat. Grant).

There is more, but this should get you started. Get HOT! Save our national and local treasures while we still can. True power is in "We the People." **TW**



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**1 Corinthians 12:12-13**

## BOOK REVIEW OF “MENDED WINGS”

### The Vietnam War Experience Through the Eyes of Ten American Purple Heart Helicopter Pilots

By Colin P. Cahoon

Talk about a wild ride, this book takes the cake! Hair raising stories from real pilots that made it through the war-years to tell their stories, and stories of those that did not make it home. Chapter 3 of course is my favorite section; it is the story told by Cdr. Chris Kilgore of the early morning hours of 1 November 1979 when the USCG search and rescue case of the Burmah Agate collision in Galveston Bay. I was the crewman on that mission. Also, chapter 10 of Chris’ flight in Vietnam when he was hit by scrap metal as he flew back to base. **Warning:** there is some strong language in this book. TW

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#### Story by Stephen Brown

Comes a time when the inevitable is standing in front of you firmly rooted with its hand out, palm up. It’s looking you square in the eye. Long ago in the dark recesses of your mind you were but vaguely aware of its presence. When the cries in the night of the first born were soothed only by a cradled arm, a lullaby and the steady persuasion of a rocking chair. Even during the peaceful sleep, you watched and smiled and marveled and wondered of what was to become. It was there with you, waiting ever patiently.

The speed of light is a broke-leg turtle compared to the speed of time. What once seemed an eternity of days on end leaned over a ball fence after grueling ten-hour prison shifts now appears no more than the blink of an eye. It was leaning on the fence with you then too, lingering tirelessly. As the first buck was taken – and the second and third – you gleamed with pride. Proud of the mastered disciplines required to complete such a solitary task. As these honed disciplines were displayed, it was there watching.

During the countless hours of piano lessons from an inspiring teacher who encouraged and demanded more complicated measures, a perpetual gift was cultivated that has rendered sweet music through our humble abode. It stood silently, listening in the corner.

A mentor was chosen during the early teen years, and a better choice couldn’t have been made. You were pleased with the recognition of the desire for wisdom and godly guidance from an outside source. It was still there. Still lingering - but beginning to shuffle its feet. Its presence was felt in the back yard, at the first practice tire change – a prerequisite before relinquishing the keys for the first time. A little stronger now, you knew back then it wouldn’t be long.

When the soul was surrendered and eternal illumination was evident, delighted were you for now the inevitable doesn’t matter. Many years later now, and the light is yet to fade.

Stood before you once, not long ago under the barn, your sanctuary. Laid out a plan, a good one it seemed. You saw determination, heard sound judgement, clarity and strength. You saw independence, so much so that it hurt. You also saw eyes that twinkled, the ones now swelled with wanderlust. A sign

you knew all too well, a sign you could readily recall and well relate to firsthand. There are many inevitables that visit each of us during the course of life. Taxes and disappointment, heartbreak and finally a meeting with the reaper to name a few. They can be paid a king’s ransom to turn aside. They can be stood against and fought with every fiber of one’s being... yet only to lose in the end. Inevitable.

Today’s inevitable is a daughter. One of whom I am well pleased. Today she leaves. Halfway across the country she goes, no longer within shoutin distance, no longer a stone’s throw away.

A handmade cedar hope chest housing cast iron three generations deep, hand-stitched quilts from before man walked on the moon, pictures and journals detailing her thoughts and dreams covering two decades are in there too. Books of music, books of intrigue, a worn-out softball glove with a bucket of balls and all she holds dear is packed and stacked in her car. Now pointed west. Texas. A college of her acceptance on a journey of her choosing, independence in full array. Today I sit, as I often do and watch the dragonflies dart to and fro across the yard. I wonder if she will remember her humble upbringing and not be ashamed of it. I wonder if she’ll look a stranger square in the eye while conversing and offer a handshake. I wonder if she’ll remember how to find north or east without a GPS. I wonder if she will see the Big Dipper in the night sky and think of home. I wonder if she will remember that to gain more in this life, she simply must desire less. I wonder if it will occur to her that when things are going really well, she should look over her shoulder. Will she miss an outside shower? Will she recall and recite the truisms of Solomon when decisions come?

Today I handed her a hand-written letter penned some time ago for this very moment. Hopefully it will be a tangible reminder of truths for her days to come.

I wished her a smidgeon of darkness in her life, just enough to make the good days seem a little brighter. And a touch of sorrow for her to feel, only to make her simple joys more profound. I wished for her a small dose of hostility, just so the tiniest drop of kindness bestowed upon her would be appreciated. I wished for her to lose a little, in order to truly appreciate what she already has. I wonder...

One of my inevitables stood in front of me today. Then she swung out over the deep water and turned loose of the rope, asking for nothing except a blessing of good will. SB

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#### Wewahitchka, Its True Meaning

by Tom Wynn

The true Creek Indian name, English translation for “Wewahitchka” means, “Place of many waters” or “Water is here” according to the then-sitting Creek Indian Chief Alonso when we questioned him about the name during an interview in the documentary I filmed, produced, and directed called: **“Tupelo Honey & The Amazing World of Beekeeping.”** We filmed it during the 2002 Tupelo honey season in Gulf County and it featured our local beekeeper James E. “Jim” Rish. The video has been published on YouTube by me. TW

## BUCKHORN CEMETERY GETS NEW ENTRANCE!

Fisher Construction Co. built the new entrance way this past month. Stage one is now complete. Ralph Fisher stated that blocks should go around the poles soon. Great Job guys! TW



Thank you all who support *The Wewa News!* Please read and enjoy while we have the time. Live good and be of good cheer for the time may be short and our new era of government and society has come to a point of no return. So, make the best of it while we still have time to love one another, and do good things for each other as often as we are able. Tom Wynn – Publisher of the Wewa News. God Speed!

## CHRISTMAS AT THE COURTHOUSE

by Ann Johnson

“Save Old Gulf County Coalition” is gearing up to host our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas at the Courthouse event on the night of the Wewa Christmas parade, December 18, 2021. Our first event was an enormous success, and we hope to build on this by adding new booths from local groups and organizations. We are looking for clubs and other groups who may want to do a fundraising event. We also would love to have anyone who would like to offer any free services or hand out information to the community to participate with us.

These groups will be back with us this year: S.W.A.T. will be handing out information and lots of goodies, the National Art Honor Society will be helping the children with painting and ornament making, and Project Graduation will be back with a food booth.

We will also have the Wewahitchka Historical Group selling Afghans with our local history on them, the Wewahitchka Library will possibly be selling Christmas ornaments displaying the old courthouse and the Famous Dead Lakes.

If you have a group willing to join us this year, contact Ann Johnson (850) 867-5970 or Jodi Rustin (229) 310-0936 with “Save Old Gulf County Coalition” for more information.



"I love the DeadLakes!  
I love Tupelo Honey!  
And I love to Read,  
"The Wewa News!"



## SHERIFF DENNIS CLARK SHOT IN THE GULF COUNTY GULF HOUSE 1930

A local writer, R. Chris Yates helped me find the answer to my burning question, what was the name of the Sheriff that was shot in our old Court House entranceway. Chris said he did some research and found three members of the

sheriff's office who were killed. He said, “A man named Flanders who was killed in a field while hunting hogs and moonshiners and another named Sheriff Charles Dennis Clark, who was killed in 1930. Both were Sheriffs, and I think the one who is supposed to haunt the courthouse is most likely Clark. It's hard-to-find old records like that, but that would be my best guess. There were three sheriffs killed, but only two after the building was put up(built in 1925-27). The other died in 1911.”

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**Galatians 3:26-28**

**A HISTORICAL FIGURE IN THE ANNALS OF  
WEWAHITCHKA FLORIDA**



**Jessie Artemis Weeks Armstrong**

**Birth: January 28, 1889**

**Death: October 10, 1975,**

Place of Burial: Jehu Rd, Wewahitchka, FL, United States

Immediate Family: Daughter of Ira Ebenezer Weeks and Nancy Artemus Weeks, wife of John Henry Armstrong. Mother of Harold Morten Armstrong; William Clayton Armstrong; Johnnie Eugene Armstrong; George Washington Armstrong; Mae Helen Armstrong, Sadie Armstrong. Of the stories told me Mama Armstrong met John Armstrong on a little road down near Wetappo creek she jumped in the wagon and her and John, road up to Abe Spring to the courthouse and got Married. Mama Armstrong loved to work in her garden she would get up early and work the garden till lunch time. At which time she would eat some cornbread and milk then sit out on the porch and rest. After John lost his leg Jessie took care of him up till his passing. All of Mama Armstrong life she never had a full bathroom, her son Gene Armstrong closed some of the back porch and put in a toilet and a sink. Mama Armstrong died of cancer in 1975.

– Calvin Roney, contributor

**FIRE ON 7<sup>TH</sup> STREET IN WEWA  
KILLS EDERLY WOMAN**

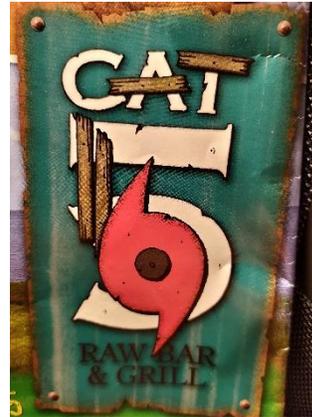
by Tom Wynn



Capt. Chris Buchanan of the Sheriff department reported via a news release that an elderly woman passed away during a fire which occurred in her home on 7<sup>th</sup> street. The fire is still under investigation, but thus far there is no sign of foul play in the incident. The Gulf County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) Communications Center received the report of a residential fire this afternoon at approximately 12:40 PM Central Time the day of the incident. Deputies and fire departments from the City of

Wewahitchka, Wetappo Creek and Stone Mill Creek responded to the 600 block of South 7th Street in Wewahitchka.

Once firemen were able to gain access inside the residence, they determined that an elderly female succumbed to the fire. The State Fire Marshal is investigating to determine how the fire started and GCSO Investigators are assisting with the case. The name of the decedent is being withheld pending positive identification by the district 14 Medical Examiner's Office. Prepared by: Capt. Chris Buchanan and approved by Gulf County Sheriff Mike Harrison. The woman that lived next door, Ms. Hanlon, was temporarily removed to home of Mr. Gene Hanlon, her brother, until her home was clear of smoke and checked for damage. As of this report, she is back in her own home.



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**OCTOBERFEST AT LAKE ALICE**



**Woman's Club selling great cookies and other things to raise funds for their local projects**

A young lady just happened to be the correct size and gets a free Wewa News Tee Shirt. Ms. Marlana Parker on the right was helping the Cantu family sell tupelo honey and giving out the October issue of The Wewa News. She is presently in training to learn how to raise queen bees for the Cantu bee business.

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## **TOM WYNN RELEASES HIS BOOK TO THE PUBLIC IN CERABRATION OF VETERANS DAY!**

**“The Rescue of a Lifetime!” by AECS Tom Wynn Jr.**

On bookshelves at Ace Hardware in Wewa and at  
The No Name Café on Reid Ave. in Port St. Joe.



**Left: CG1426 as it sits on the back of a Coast Guard  
Cutter in 1979. Photo by LTJG Chris Kilgore, Pilot.**

**Right: Hanging from the Smithsonian in 2016.**

**Photo by AECS Tom Wynn Jr., Air Crewman**

The Smithsonian Institute was glad to finally get and accept the newly restored, to its former glory, the HH52A Helicopter CG 1426 called, “Sea Guard.” The loving hands of those that tore it down to its nuts and bolts, to name just two, was retired: CWO Craig Simmons (who is a dear friend and was my boss at AR&SC in the mid 1980’s before I made Chief) as well as retired USCG Officer and pilot John Siemens. They, with others, stripped the aircraft to its bare metal hull and restored to its former glory in about one years’ time. The first flying boat hull helicopter, along with its 98 brothers, saved well over 15,000 lives during their service life to the U.S. Coast Guard and our nation. It was a major workhorse of the U.S. Coast Guard Aviation team. CG 1426 completed its service with 12,619 flight hours. It made three major rescues in 1969 and 1979. In May 1969, it was involved in the rescue of 104 Mormon schoolchildren from a vessel on fire in the Gulf of Mexico near Tarpon Springs, Florida and a major marijuana bust in the seventies. Its greatest fame of all came in the early morning hour of 5 am at Air Station Houston Texas on 1 November 1979.

I was standing duty that night, with my duty crew, I was the senior petty officer of my duty section. I was standing SAR (search and rescue) air crewmen that night. I flew with these two pilots standing watch for day and night missions many times over those years stationed with them. I trained with them continually as well. That chilly morning in 1979 at 5 am we got the call. At 5:07 we were in the air. We responded within 7 minutes into the air (don’t ask me how, but my crew told me, I claimed into the helo half-dressed and barefooted). It turned out to be the worst modern maritime disaster ever up and to that time (it is still listed in the top 10 worst oil spills disasters in human history). That dark morning, In the Gulf of Mexico, a Liberian-flagged tanker, “The Burmah Agate” carrying 300,000 barrels of crude oil collided with the Liberian-flagged freighter “Mimosa” off Galveston, resulting in a massive fire. What we thought was a third ship on fire, turned out to be 300-foot-tall fumes of fire from the oil spill, it stretched the distant of a modern ship. In three trips from the ships to a close by Oil Rig we, LCDR J.C. Cobb pilot, LTJG Chris Kilgore co-pilot along with myself, at the time, Petty Officer 2nd class Thomas “Tom” Wynn Jr., rescued 22 survivors (another helicopter then rescued an additional five survivors during the morning daylight).

More details of this case may be seen in the Washington Post article (google: Tom Wynn saves 22 lives for the article) written back in 2016 and my book, published this month publicly (I have

issued copies to family and Coast Guard members since 2016). In cerebration of this year’s Veterans Day, I am releasing my story to the public.

After saving those men in nearly 3 hours of unbelievable flying. We were running low on fuel. When our jet engine ran out of fuel as our wheels touched the ground in Houston. We flamed out! A total of 2. 8 hours, we were able to save a total of 22 men on board two exploding/burning ships and our own 3 lives, thanks to the flying experience of my pilots. This was the night I changed my lifestyle for evermore. You could say I saw Hell on earth up front and personal. 27 saved (5 saved by the second helo CG 1466), 28 lost that night by fire and sea. USCG Air Station Houston flew on that case for 68 more days and nights. USCG Cutters and boats looked for dead bodies and worked hard to recover evidence of what in the world happened.

In late 2014, The USCG Aviation Association had purchased the HH-52A—tail number 1426—from the North Valley Occupational Center in Van Nuys, California, an aviation school specializing in aircraft maintenance. The U.S. Coast Guard had donated the helicopter CG 1426 to the school in the year 1989; the school agreed to trade it to the Pterodactyls Association for a more modern aircraft—an HU-25 Falcon jet that was retired as well. They were glad to make the swap!

The Pterodactyls (The Coast Guard Aviation Association) became aware that this Sea Guard, all worn out and tired, was famous for its mission having saved 22 men aboard two exploding and burning ships in Galveston Bay. The airframe had an amazing story to tell the world, which had been set aside over the many years’ Lieutenants Chris Kilgore and LCDR J.C. Cobb, along with Petty Officer 2nd class Thomas “Tom” Wynn Jr. were the crew that rescued 22 men from an inferno and the abyss covered with flaming dark crude oil. This was written about in over 19 different Aviation Magazines during the years 2016/17.

Today this flying boat hangs in glory in an air-conditioned structure so all the world can see with amazement, just a short distance in feet is the Space shuttle housed in its own location hanger. Most people never knew just how hard it was to restore the CG 1426 by those loving hands.

As it hangs today, it is a memorial to the many men and women of the USCG Aviation team that worked on it, flew it and loved it. We spend our youth and strength to keep it in the air to save all the lives that called out to the USCG for help. We loved our jobs and would do it all over again, I am sure. God is good to those that love others and are willing to present their own lives before danger, to save another. May God bless those that flew and worked in the past and today in the USCG Aviation community. Without the boat and ship’s crew, as well as the other aircraft that flew (C131 from Air Station Corpus Christi) over us as we saved those men on those two exploding and burning ships, we would have had a much harder time of it. We thank the CO and crew of USCGC Valiant along with boat crews that endured the burning smells and high heat as well as picking up the dead men covered in thick black oil for days on end. The USCG loves you as does our entire Nation. God Bless the USCG!

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**– Tom Wynn, Publisher and Owner**



"I love the DeadLakes!  
I love Tupelo Honey!  
And I love to Read,  
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**Disclosure:** *The Wewa News* is owned and operated by the founder of *The New Made Man Ministries & Int'l Missions*, Brother Tom Wynn, and is a part of the ministry. ARR

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