

## Love of community keeps columnist busy

Should the writer tried hard to select an activity to keep him busy after retiring as county judge in 1992, it is doubtful that he would have ever chosen writing a newspaper column. Between 1992 and 2003, he was kept busy with the duties of the watermelon festival, which was experiencing a growth spurt and with the constitution and care of Chipley Chapel Primitive Baptist Congregation in which he was a founding member.

In April 2003, the former owners of the Washington County News suggested a weekly column, using as a topic "the many careers of Perry Wells." It seemed like an interesting idea. Looking back, I think my real feelings were that such an endeavor would last only a few weeks!

Along the way, and with the newspaper's blessings, featured articles, in addition to the regular "Perry's Prattle," were added to my writings. It was my honor and privilege to write articles on several leading Washington County citizens after their death.

These include Tillman Pippin, Hubert Cope, Rex T. Yates, former Washington County Judge, Willis Carl Trawick, Rev. Adolph Phares and the founders of R & M Electric Shop, Nolan McDaniel and J. T. Rustin.

Some of the topics were

on the life and experiences of several businesses and individuals. Included in these, was Frances Hays, a Chipley Barber, who is following in the footsteps of his father, Oscar Hayes, and his uncle, Lem Hayes. longtime career



**PERRY'S PRATTLE**  
Perry Wells

barbers. For years, Harvey Hayes followed the barber profession, along with his brother, before pursuing other employment.

Many of my "features" were written on topics which have interesting connotation. One such story was on the patent medicine, Hadacol, which many well remember. Another topic was the telephone directory in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, where nicknames were used in the names.

Among the highlights of my special writing was reporting on the funeral of Martha Jean Cooper Chasse, who was interred in Washington County's most historic cemeteries, on Sept. 8, 2008, the first burial there since James Willis Taylor was entombed Jan. 6, 1957. Mr. Clark Rogers told me that, as a school bus driver for the county, he delivered a bus load of friends, relatives and neighbors to Mr. Taylor's funeral to the serene cemetery, located in what old timers still refer to as Moody's Pasture.

My interest in old country, gospel, bluegrass and traditional music,

brought a commitment that I write stories on the well-known performer in that category as they have passed away. I know that I am not recalling all the articles written in every category.

Those I readily recall were Hank Locklin, Don Helms (of the famed Hank Williams Band), Miss Kitty Wells, and later her husband, Johnny Wright, Folk Music Legend, Doc Watson and Wilma Lee Cooper of Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper fame. On Sept. 7, it was my sad duty to report the deaths of two music stars who performed concerts at the May 22, 1982 Railroad Centennial Celebration. They were Dr. Bill Foster of the Foster String Band from Florence, Alabama and Oscar Sullivan, of the Lonzo and Oscar Band out of Nashville.

Among the veteran tributes, it has been my privilege to write a special feature article on my uncle, James Archie Harris. Bethel Primitive Baptist Church honored him with a special tribute on October 11, 2003 in a ceremony formulated by Merrill T. (Tom) Beasley, LTC, Inf, FARNG, Retired, the late Pat Davis and your writer. Col. Beasley narrated the major battle campaigns of Harris, including North Africa and Anzio Beach. He also outlined a host of Awards, including The Purple Heart at Anzio, along with the Silver Star and Bronze Star honors.

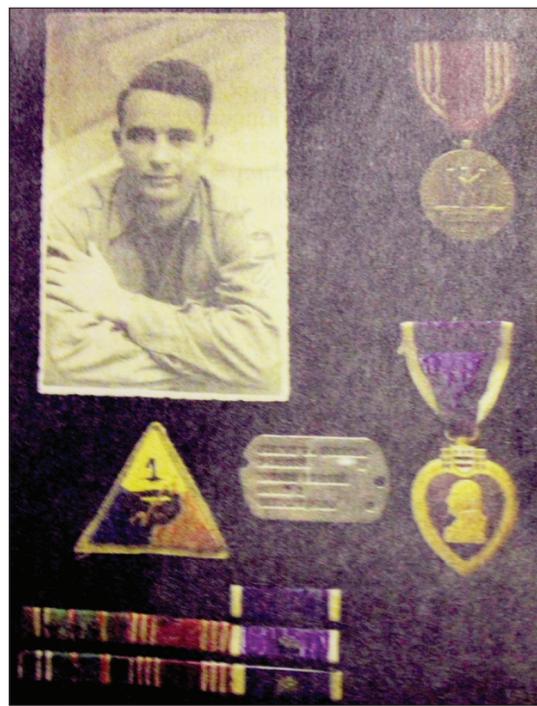
On Aug. 4, 2007, the

opportunity came to feature a second World War II veteran and highly decorated hero, John Julius Fussell. I vividly recall sitting with him in the spacious and comfortable sales shelter on the Fussell Farm where he calmly and methodically outlined his U. S. Army experiences paralleling the travels of Archie Harris. Fussell received combat injuries at Anzio Beach and again at Po River in Italy. He was highly decorated with numerous awards, Combat Citations and ribbons for his honored service.

John Julius Fussell passed away June 3 at the age of 93 while surrounded by his loving family. Funeral services were conducted at Piney Grove Free Will Baptist Church on June 5 with throngs attending the funeral conducted by Rev. Alan English and the pastor, Rev. Tim Owen.

Imagine the writer's surprise and excitement when Rev. Owen immediately stated he would be basing many of his remarks on Judge Wells' article in the newspaper in 2007 entitled "John Julius Fussell qualifies as one of 'The Greatest Generation.'" He proceeded to quote much of contents of this book by Tom Brokaw, published in 1999.

Your writer was again humbled in Rev. Owen making special reference to my story, where I wrote: "Had Tom Brokaw, the international known journalist and newscaster,



AP

Staff Sgt. John Julius Fussell, pictured in a collage of the many Ribbons, Clusters, Medals, plus his "Dog Tag." Frances and Julius had a perfect attendance record at all the 1944 Vernon High School Reunions, with the last one being held on April 20, 2013.

chosen to use Washington County as the setting for his book, he would have looked no further than the life of John Julius Fussell, as one of the many featured heroes named in his beautiful World War II stories." Rev. English also referred to the deceased as numbering among The Greatest Generation, commenting, "sadly it is a generation that is fast becoming extinct."

Please allow me to continue to think that

my path of writing for the past ten years is surely the Providential Hand of God directing my efforts. I have been more than compensated for my endeavors in ways other than in a pay check. 86 year old, Cecil Pippin, added to that pay day when he told me at Julius' funeral his blessing in reading my article on his friend, J. C. Griffin, who passed away earlier this year.

See you all next week.

### HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Letters to the editor and comments on Web versions of news stories are welcomed.

Letters are edited only for grammar, spelling, clarity, space and consistency, but we ask that they be limited to 300 words where possible. Letter writers are asked to provide a home address and daytime telephone number (neither is printed) for verification purposes.

Letters may be sent to 1364 N. Railroad Ave., Chipley, FL 32428 or emailed to news@chipleypaper.com. Please specify if the letter should be printed in the Washington County News or Holmes County Times-Advertiser. Questions? Call 638-0212.



## Holmes County Historical Society recognizes two special ladies

Two ladies who contributed greatly to the publication of the Heritage of Holmes County book which was published in 2006 have recently passed away.

This past week Mrs. Hazel Pierce Helms Maringer died after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease.

Even though the beginning stages of the malady had already begun its work, Mrs. Maringer was the catalyst for the publication of Holmes County's only family history.

When she learned that Heritage Publishing Company's owner, David Bice, was attempting to get a committee together for the purpose of collecting and assembling family stories which would be published in a volume available to the public, Mrs. Maringer called the publisher, arranged for a meeting with the Holmes County Historical Society and the process began.

Many current and former county residents contributed to the work by submitting their family stories, but the book would never have been a reality, had not Mrs. Hazel Maringer arranged that first meeting.

Hazel Maringer was also responsible for securing the Florida style home which was moved from the New Hope community to Bonifay to serve as the Historical Society's museum.

In addition to Mrs. Maringer who served as chairman of the Heritage book committee, others who served on the committee were Pat Andrews, James and Mildred Williams, Nancy Thomas, and six retired educators, John Brownell, Dot Galloway, Helen Galloway, Nadine Hall, Shirlene Lashley, and Hazel Tison.

Helen Commander Galloway also passed away recently. Her work in researching and writing the report on the schools for the Heritage History of Holmes County was invaluable.

Mrs. Galloway was a beloved home economics teacher at

Bethlehem and Ponce de Leon.

She began teaching at Bethlehem two years after my husband went there as agriculture teacher and they worked together until he moved to Holmes County High School in 1964.

Helen moved to her alma mater, Ponce de Leon in 1976 where she remained until retirement in 1981.

Through the years as we have attended BHS school and class reunions with Bill and Helen, the love that her former students have for her attests to the kind of teacher she was.

She received the Distinguished Service Award from the Florida Future Homemakers of America during her career. She and her students brought numerous honors to Bethlehem High School.

I get inquires about the availability of the Heritage History of Holmes County. During June, the Publisher, Heritage Publishing has books for sale for a limited time for a price of \$45 plus shipping.

At the present time there are none available in the county, but the Holmes County Historical Society is in the process of securing copies and placing them in locations for the public to buy.

They will then return to the pre-publication price of something like \$65.

The Holmes County Historical Society is also planning a tag sale/yard sale with a silent auction on Saturday July 13 from 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. at the Historical Society Building at 412 W. Kansas Ave.

If you have items to donate, contact LaVonne Tardif, the treasurer, at 547-7328. On that date, the museum will be open for visitors. Also on the first Saturday of each month from July through October, the museum will be open from 9 till 12 A.M.

With deep appreciation, the Historical Society recognizes the importance of the contributions of Mrs. Hazel Maringer and Mrs. Helen



**HAPPY CORNER**  
Hazel Wells Tison

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