

News from Small Town (Tawas)

Middle America

Issue #23

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by Michael Gilfix

Enjoy this Newsletter and let me know what you think!

For an explanation of my goal and the inspiration, look to the end of this newsletter. You will see information about where Tawas is located and how big it isn't.

Update from Flooded California

The whole world knows that California is getting soaked. Record setting rainfall and high winds are plaguing major parts of California – and the Gilfix family is not immune. Both our home and our “mountain retreat” have experienced leaks. Erosion is threatening a hillside. Home repair, roofing, and handyman industries are thriving as demand dramatically outpaces supply of capable home and property protectors.

Let's face it: every area has its natural disaster exposures. I remember a tornado wiping out a mobile home near Tawas when I was a kid. I remember huddling in the northeast (or was it northwest?) corner of our tiny, dark, cobwebbed basement when there was a tornado watch. I remember snowstorms that shut down the schools (hallelujah!) and made roads impassable in Tawas. The good news about snowstorms and snow drifts from my childhood: Jimmy and I would go out and shovel sidewalks, sometimes getting as much as a quarter!

We in California will weather the storms. Our experience reminds me that safety and security flow from our sense of community, from having neighbors we can count on. This continues to be a “small town value” that is to be emulated.

Iosco County News Herald – January 4, 2023

Made-For-Television Development in Local “Murder for Hire” Case

First, let's acknowledge that “murder for hire” cases are rare. It has to be the talk of the town in Tawas that a local city councilman was charged with solicitation of murder. It turns out that the key witness against him just died, purportedly of natural causes, in Georgia. There is apparently other evidence, but his defense attorney must be having a field day. This is one of those cases where I am tempted to say “you can't make this up.”

Unique “Antique, Vintage, and Classic Snowmobile” Show Just Happened in Hale, a Few Miles from Tawas

There are countless miles of snowmobile opportunities in the woods of Northeastern Michigan. An exhilarating joy for countless snowmobilers, they are the scourge of cross-country skiers who enjoy the solitude and quiet of the forest. Nevertheless, snowmobiles

are a big deal and this show will attract excited attention. It includes antique sleds from as early as 1942.

Good News for Local Businesses – The Holiday Season Was A Success

A front page article includes interviews a number of small business owners who “did really well,” in the words of an Oscoda drug store employee.

This is a good sign, suggesting that the effort to “shop local” has had some success.

Walmart of Tawas City Hosts “Shop With A Hero”

The nearby Michigan State Police Post teamed up with Walmart for this wonderful event. 25 kids were given \$100 to spend on holiday gifts. Each of them teamed up with someone from the local police, coast guard, or fire departments. Each volunteer from these offices was described as “a hero.” This should be something of a model for communities across the country where community relationships with police departments, in particular, are frayed. There is nothing better than an experience like this, where underprivileged kids meet and do something wonderful with a uniformed professional.

Kudos to the Laidlaw Foundation

I was in high school (different grade) with Nancy Laidlaw Huck, who is president of the Laidlaw Foundation. I didn’t know her well, but am so impressed to see what she and her family foundation are doing. The foundation was established in 1990 and has been awarding college scholarships ever since. This year, \$28,000 was awarded to a number of students heading off to college. I know from personal experience how much of a difference such scholarships can make.

The Arts Thrive

The fact is that artistic performances thrive in so many small towns in America. Hale, even smaller than Tawas and host of the Classic Snowmobile Show (see above), hosted a Dueling Pianos event on January 7. It was sponsored by the local Lion’s Club as a benefit.

In nearby Standish, a “delightful” band performed at the Art Center. It offered “originals, folk, Irish, and American music,” replete with story telling and lots of laughing.

Local theater groups also thrive. If I was still living in town, I would be a theater-going regular.

Still No Fishing Report

Ice Fishing anyone?

Notes from the Author

The Goal of my Tawas News is to educate and amuse you about my home town, East Tawas, Michigan. It is to remind you that small towns still thrive in America, that they are sometimes struggling, often vibrant. It is based on my hometown weekly newspaper, personal memories, and occasional, very personal observations.

The Inspiration: The inspiration was Garrison Keillor’s “News from Lake Wobegon” on his NPR show, Prairie Home Companion. Lake Wobegon was fictional, quietly poignant and lol enjoyable.

Tawas is not fictional; it is very real. It is similar to Lake Wobegon in many ways – the farmers, the pastors, the community where everybody knows everybody's business.

The town of East Tawas is located on Lake Huron on the lower peninsula about 110 miles north of Flint, Michigan. The population is around 2,723. It hasn't grown much from my childhood in the 50's and 60's. The adjacent town of Tawas City has a population of about 1,726. Why 2 separate towns? Don't ask.

So, enjoy, and let me know what you think. Share it with friends and family. I am happy to add anyone to the mailing list, so send me names.

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