

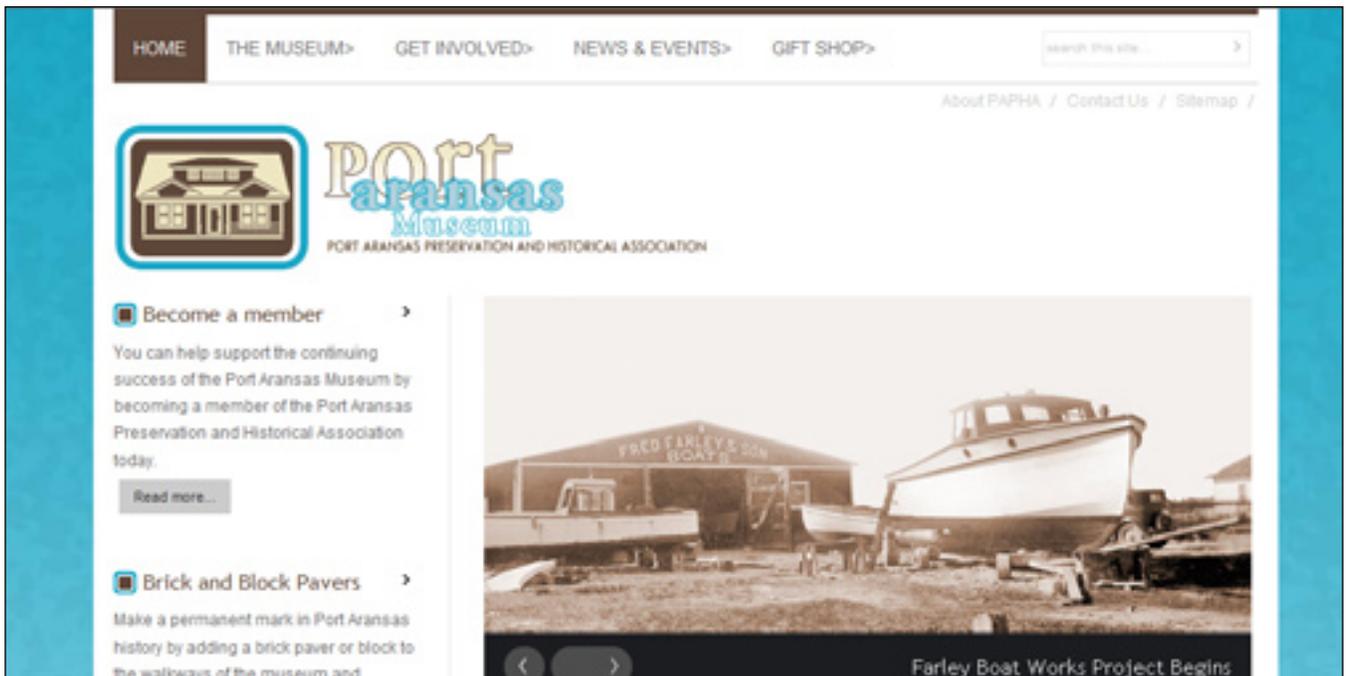
# Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association

Volume 5, Issue 6

PAPHA Newsletter

June 2011

## New PAPHA Website Check It Out!



### www.portaransasmuseum.org

Work continues on our new website. We are working toward making it more user-friendly, easier to get more information, and easier to purchase PAPHA and Port Aransas Museum items.

Alvin Ubiera has created the new website. Suggestions will be considered, so please feel free to email sug-

gestions to communication@portaransasmuseum.org.

When finished, you will be able to become a member, purchase brick & block pavers, purchase photos and more!

Check back often to see how far we've come.

### Lecture Series Dates Set

PAPHA and the Port Aransas Museum have set the following dates for the 2011 and 2012 Winter Lecture Series:

- November 14
- November 28
- December 12
- January 16
- January 30
- February 13
- February 27
- March 19

Mark your calendars now so you don't miss any of the entertaining and informative lectures.

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**Wanted: Docents!!!**

Got some free time? We invite you to be a docent for the Port Aransas Museum. A docent can do a variety of things: give tours, work in the gift shop, help with the computer/bookkeeping, work on displays, work on the internet, help transcribe the Mercer logs, help with Little Chapel tours, clean, and more. Contact Museum Docent Coordinator Karen Larsen at docentspaha@yahoo.com

# Museum Director's Report

## Creating Order, Preventing Chaos

### June 2011

Our initial decision on founding the museum was to be a non-collecting institution. We wished only to borrow items and own nothing. That would neatly step around the big problem of maintaining large storage areas filled with valuable and perhaps delicate items that must be carefully curated and cared for. Borrowing things would allow us to spice up our photo based exhibits and to give the visitors something real to associate with the period of history we are illustrating.

The problem is that things just sort of accumulate, and despite our best efforts, we have ended up in possession of some artifacts (the restored Farley Tarpon Boat "Tina" for example). Now to keep the system of borrowing or accepting things orderly, we have an accession form which is filled out and then stored in the computer.

During Spring Break, someone broke in to the museum and stole the upstairs computer and all the accession forms with it. To complicate matters further, we did not have that computer backed up with Carbonite, due to an oversight. The others are all so equipped, we just didn't get this one hooked in. So the records were lost. Luckily there were only a few. But we learned a lesson.

To bring order to our "unwilling accessions", we

considered utilizing the proprietary museum software package, "Past Perfect".

Mark Creighton and Guthrie Ford met with Director Rick Stryker and his lead IT person at the Corpus Christi Museum to discuss this move. They decided against it, as it was just too big and complicated for such a small institution as ours, and the long learning curve did not fit well with a volunteer organization.

The need to better organize remains, and will grow as our museum grows.

So we are re-designing our own system. (The new computer is backed up with Carbonite by the way!)

There is another storage option that may fit us. It is known as a "Cloud" system and utilizes the same idea as Gmail with an online storage depot to handle all records. Currently both Mac and PC are offering such systems. This allows us to store everything and thus if a computer crashes and burns, or is stolen, we have lost nothing as everything is stored off site.

I am discussing it with IT folks.

### Website

Pam Greene and Alvin Ubiera are working to complete the content of the new website. Ubiera told me a launch date of early this week is expected. It is a good one and far more interactive than the old one.

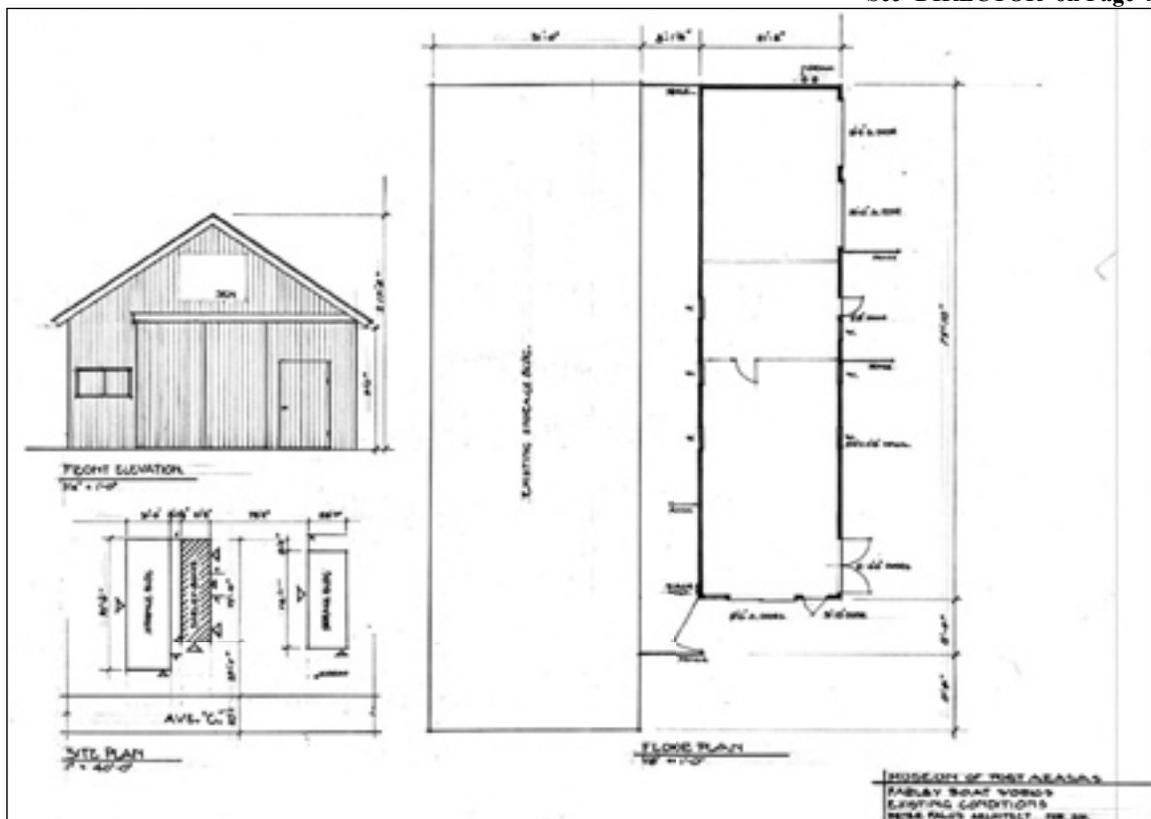
Read the article by Pam Greene elsewhere in this newsletter for a more complete description and then follow the live link to the new website.

### Farley Matters

The Farley Boat Works Committee met Thursday, June 2, and finalized the configuration of the old Farley shop. (See the concept drawing below) This then will be converted to plans by Scott Warner, then we will seek the necessary permits by the City, and request bids for the restoration work.

Team member Matt Landry is seek-

See 'DIRECTOR' on Page 4



# PAPHA Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

**I.** The meeting was called to order by President Nancy Phillips at 6pm in the Museum, Port Aransas, TX. Present: Mark Creighton, Nancy Donley, Pat Farley, J. Guthrie Ford, John Fucik, Kristi Goldston, Mark Grosse, Mary H. McKnight, June Pettitt, Rick Pratt, Nancy Phillips and Bruce Reynolds. A quorum was present.

**II. MINUTES.** The minutes of the Board Meeting of May 11, 2011, as distributed via the Internet were approved on a motion by Nancy Donley.

**III. TREASURER'S REPORT.** Bruce Reynolds distributed the statement of financial position as of April 30, 2011, and a profit and loss budget for January-April 2011. An updated budget for PAPHA was also presented for the entire year of 2011. John Fucik moved to approve the treasurer's report. Second, (NAME). Carried.

## IV. NEW BUSINESS

**A. Docent Director's Report:** Karen Larsen said docents contributed 165 hours of time. She reported that there were 214 U.S. visitors and 7 international visitors. She stated that the following Wednesday that a docents' meeting would be held for the purpose of recruitment.

**B.** Guthrie Ford presented a slide show outlining the necessary requirements for a Civil War reenactment of the shelling of the town by federal troops offshore. Reenactment is tentatively planned for Saturday, February 11, 2012. A committee was appointed of Mark Creighton, Nancy Donley, Guthrie Ford, Mary Hammond, Rick Pratt and Bruce Reynolds. Guthrie will approach John Nixon about using the Poly Anna as the mother ship, possibly to include pyrotechnics. Guthrie stated that sound effects are critical and entire reenactment at this time is one to two hours total. Cost of reenactment is to be determined. It is estimated to take 15 to 17 actors with a possibility of some old family locals participating. The estimated cost for actors is \$2500. The estimated cost for pyrotechnics is \$5000. Estimated cost for Master of Ceremonies is \$1000. The possibility

of a fundraiser to pay for reenactment was discussed. A budget is expected from Guthrie Ford in the near future.

**C. Museum Director's Report.** Rick distributed his report outlining progress on the recently purchased Farley Boat Works. Rick was to meet with the City Inspector to outline renovation project. He stated that there was a total of \$80,000 in pledges pending, \$30,000 from the Brown Foundation and \$50,000 from an anonymous source. Rick is to meet with the City Inspector to discuss electrical, plumbing and parking.

1. The Oral History Project is ahead of schedule.

2. Mercer Log Project. Guthrie Ford updated the Board on the progress that he and Gary Ramsey have made.

3. The PAPHA website is moving slowly.

4. Susan Castor and Christi Farley have agreed to volunteer their decorating skills to choose colors and design for upstairs Museum.

5. Director Pratt distributed drawings of the boat work eventual floor plans, including a display for the Tina boat in the front half and the boat building projects that will take place in the back half. He discussed the possibility of teaching boat building to volunteers and high school students. He stated that Doyle Marek has volunteered to teach 3 Museum volunteers to build a classic Farley Tarpon skiff, with which a fundraiser may be possible by auctioning a historical duck hunt.

**D.** Rick Pratt asked that a chief financial officer be named and recommended Bruce Reynolds. Nancy Donley made a motion to nominate Bruce Reynolds as new chief financial officer. Second, Guthrie Ford.

**E.** John Fucik is to write a grant asking for \$2000 to \$4000.

**F.** Pat Farley suggested getting an estimate on installation and monthly fees of a security system for the Museum and was appointed to do so.

**G.** Mark Creighton gave an update on the Museum software that is currently used by 7700 museums, including the Library of Congress. He

stated that it is complicated software and would require vigorous training.

**H.** June Pettitt gave update on old town street sign designations, which will have to be presented before the City Council. She stated the possibility of designating an entire neighborhood as "old town" and was advised of the inevitable protests by those neighborhoods that would not be included. Rick Pratt made a motion to approach the City about old town designations. Second, Guthrie Ford. The Old Town Designation Committee will include Pat Farley, June Pettitt, Guthrie Ford and Mark Grosse.

**I. Report from Financial Budget Committee.** Rick Pratt's salary was discussed. The Brown donation was discussed because of their wishes for the funds to be used for the purchase of the Tina boat only.

## V. OLD BUSINESS.

**A.** Guthrie Ford updated the board on the progress of the Mercer Log transcriptions. He hopes they will be completed by February 2012.

Guthrie Ford moved to adjourn. Second, Nancy Donley.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Pat Farley, Recording Secretary



PAPHA files

Totsy Millican with Tarpon

# Historic Crossings of the Aransas Bar

John Guthrie Ford

The water area in front of a coastal pass is called the bar; and crossing the bar means one is sailing—or steaming—into a pass with the intent to go through it. That the Aransas Pass is a historic location is due in no small measure to these noteworthy crossings of the Aransas bar.

While exploring the Texas coastline in 1519, Alonso Álvarez de Pineda spotted the pass and crossed the bar, hopeful that the subsequent waterway was the elusive passage to India. What this Spaniard did find was a sparkling bay he named Corpus Christi. (To reach the bay, it is inferred that Pineda sailed through the Aransas Pass; of course it might have been the Corpus Christi Pass at Mustang's southern tip.)

After France's Jean Béranger came

through the pass (*ca* 1720), he made a notable study of fauna and flora, as well as the Cópanes branch of the Karankawa people. Later, the Spanish crossed the bar to find out what the French had been doing in their territory—the usual mouse-and-cat game the French and Spanish played in Texas. To show the flag, the Spanish established the famous El Copano town/port on Copano Bay.

John Linn was a American eager to do business with the new (1821) Mexican nation. In 1829, Linn's ship came through the pass and sailed to Corpus Christi Bay, where this enterprising businessman sold a cargo of tobacco to Mexican buyers. Many recognize the John Linn crossing as the initiation of the Aransas Pass as a commercial waterway.

Openly rebellious acts in 1835 Texas caused Mexican General Martín Cos to send 500 soldiers to cross the Aransas bar on September 20th and land at El Copano (to proceed on to San Antonio de Valero—the Alamo). James Power, a Texian leader in the area, observed this happening and sent out riders who spread the galvanizing message, “Cos means war!” The spark that lit the fuse of the Texas Revolution came through the Aransas Pass—the war began 12 days later.

The most famous shipwreck at the pass happened literally at the bar in 1876. While trying to cross in bad weather, the steamship *Mary* foundered, and the Aransas bar pilots made a dramatic rescue of the ship's company. This sinking was a stimulus for the Aransas Life Saving Station (precursor of today's USCG Station Port Aransas).

There occurred in 1989 an event that for a day prohibited ships from crossing the Aransas bar. To protest the law requiring their nets have turtle exclusion devices, area shrimpers lashed their boats together to form an impenetrable chain across the ship channel—just east of the ferry landing. A cheerier event occurred in 1992 when full scale replicas of the three Columbus ships, a gift from Spain, crossed the Aransas bar en route to Corpus to commemorate America's 500th year. And in 2000, the converted car ferry, *Texas Treasure*, steamed through the pass with all flags flying to introduce a new form of tourism to our area: offshore gambling. (The TT operation ceased in 2008.)

**GLOSSARY:** ARÁNZAZU: Spanish (Basque) word connoting a dangerous place; origin of Aransas. CORPUS CHRISTI: Latin, body of Christ. DITCH (the): Corpus Christi ship channel.

[J. Guthrie Ford, Ph.D., is a recognized local history scholar and award winning writer of heritage literature. His book on Mustang Island history, *A Texas Island*, is offered at the Port Aransas Museum.]

## 'DIRECTOR NOTES'

Cont. from page 1

ing contractors who will volunteer at least part of their time to accomplish

## At the Gift Shop Nancy Phillips

The new jewelry items in the Museum Gift Shop are so exciting. Sandy Forrest-Hartman designs her creations using metal crochet, stamping and vintage dominoes. Her sparkling personality comes through into her creations making them delightful.

Sandy lives now in San Antonio and comes to Port Aransas frequently to keep her items up to date. Her business is called Mystic Angel Creations.

She is well acknowledged in the jewelry making field having been featured in stories in the “Houston Chronicle”, the “Galveston County Daily News”, “Gulfscapes Magazine” and other publications. She was also featured in a segment on HGTV.

She's been able to find nice antique dominoes in antique stores and sometimes on ebay. Lately she's been branching out and trying some old mah jong tiles, too.

the restoration. If you are a willing contractor, please contact the museum: 749-3800 (leave a message) or email [rickpratt45@gmail.com](mailto:rickpratt45@gmail.com).

Training of boat builders/teachers will likely begin in Aransas Pass at Herb Lancaster's shop (thank you Herb), so that we will be ready to start the program when the Farley Boat Works opens. Herb's shop is fully equipped and ready to go.

Plans are to have Doyle Marek, our senior statesman and lead boat builder, teach three or four people how to build a Port Aransas Skiff. The team will then immediately construct a second skiff, and if they seem ready, we will open the program to students.

These two skiffs may be available for sale to help fund the operation. If you are interested in owning one of the first boats to come out of the newly restored Farley Boat Works, AND/OR if you would like to become a boat builder and have the time to volunteer, call the museum and let us know, or drop me an email at [rickpratt45@gmail.com](mailto:rickpratt45@gmail.com).

Planning programs and exhibits for the shop are next up on the Farley team agenda.

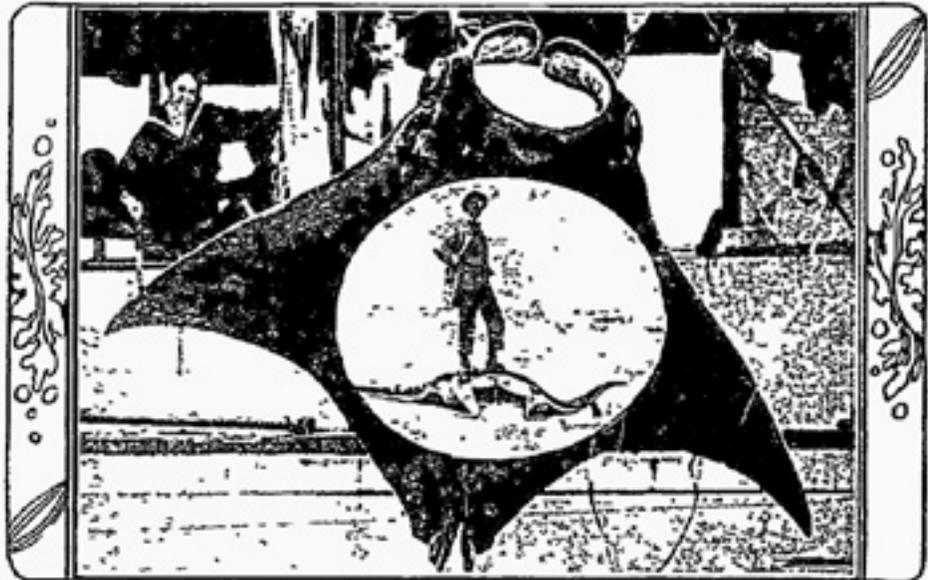
*Rick Pratt*

# Harpooning the Devil Fish

**T**HE devil fish, *Manta vampyrus*, has no arms like the octopus, resembling more a bat than any other animal of the water. He is really a giant ray fish, as his whip-like tail indicates. Unlike other rays, the skates, etc., his mouth is in front of the head, containing weak teeth, protected by horny fins in form of flippers for seizing objects that obstruct his path and to brush in such food as he finds. It has now become the rage of men cruising in Southern waters to spend much time harpooning devil fish, being sure of exciting sport from start to finish.

Many men have had adventures harpooning devil fish. That of Surgeon General P. J. A. Cleary, U. S. A., retired, of Brooklyn, is one of the most unusual. The monster he captured was 12 feet long, 17½ feet wide, and was estimated to weigh variously from 2,000 to 3,500 pounds. The scene of capture was at Tarpon, on Mustang Island, fifteen miles from Rockport, on the Southwest Coast of Texas. A body of men were fishing at Aransas Pass, where the Government jetty extends for some two miles out into the gulf, when six or eight immense devil fish came in, playing at or near the surface. Some succeeded in hooking them with tarpon tackle, which was equivalent to tying the late Jumbo to a tree by a thread. The fish did not notice these attentions, but continued to gambol about the boats, attempting no harm. One big fellow, which seemed securely hooked, turned and made for the boat where the angler was praying for a flying machine, but merely passed under it and along about his business.

The next day several harpoons were taken along in the hope of causing the devil fishes to pay the anglers the courtesy of a little attention. The scheme worked, but not according to anything mentioned by Hoyle or noted in the annals of the Nautical Almanac. There were sixteen boats off the outer end of the breakwater. Gen. Cleary's boat was outermost and he was the first to sight the largest devil fish and called for harpoons. Two powerful boatmen, Kline and Farley, and Gen. Cleary went in pursuit. When they reached the fish's Kline drove a harpoon into the center of its back. There was a fierce splashing and beating of water, then the fish dove and made off at a lively gait. Gen. Cleary followed the harpooner in a skiff and as the fish made a turn, retracing its course, he cast a rope into Kline's boat, where it was made fast, while the monster swam toward the jetty. The other boats then, one after another, made fast, until all sixteen craft were being towed in procession. Making a turn, the monster headed out to sea, like a tug, taking his tows at a fast clip;



DEVIL FISH, HARPOONED IN THE GULF OF MEXICO, NEAR MARCO INLET, FLORIDA, WEIGHT 1,800 POUNDS, BREADTH 16 FEET, MOUTH 30 INCHES WIDE

again he retraced toward the jetty, doubling on his path and made for the center of the fleet. Trouble seemed imminent, but by lifting their tow ropes the boats evaded collision and managed to keep in line.

The great fish next dashed toward a big iron buoy, and was running so close that Gen. Cleary had to cut the tow line, releasing the fleet. With only one boat attached, the devil fish made again for the open gulf. When finally he circled back once more, Gen. Cleary retasked the fleet to Kline's boat. The fish next coursed several miles parallel with St. Joseph's Island, finally going out to sea again. He was still as fresh as ever, and not desiring a long voyage out on the gulf, Gen. Cleary dispatched a messenger for further assistance. I. E. Cotter, secretary of the Aransas Pass Tarpon Club and keeper of the Tarpon Inn, responded, making for the fray in another boat with a harpoon and rifle. Maneuvering, he got close in front of the monster and drove a second harpoon into him. After more churning of the water the monster came to the surface. Mr. Cotter fired ten bullets into him, and the splashing and struggling of the fish gradually diminished until death ensued. In addition to the two harpoon ropes, Mr. Cotter attached a heavy stout hook and rope to the fish, and the fleet found it was harder to drag the devil fish in to the wharf than for the monster to tow the fleet around the bay. As it was, two of the ropes broke.

Edward Vom Hofe of New York details some of his outing in South Florida waters to the pursuit and harpooning of devil fish. He estimates his largest at upward of 1,000 pounds. Having harpooned one, Mr. Vom Hofe enjoys the novelty of playing his prey like any other smaller fish. For this purpose he devised a wooden hand brake, which enabled him to let out rapidly without blistering his hands or other inconven-

ience, reeling in the slack on a cable drum. If the pursuit becomes tiresome he has the rope carried ashore and fastened, when the fish is reeled in at leisure. Owing to the storms, it isn't always convenient to be joy riding behind a devil fish in gulf waters.

A Pittsburg man harpooned and brought to gaff, then backed up against the side of his big ocean-going motorboat a devil fish near Marco Inlet, Fla. He had a mouth two and one-third feet wide and an estimated weight of 1,800 pounds.

The devil fish inhabit warm water seas, but rather near the shores, some occasionally venturing as far north as New York. Their characteristic pose is said to be that of lying motionless in the sand under water, like a flounder, or on the bottom, the only motion observable being of the disc slightly undulating with respiration. They have been seen a yard or so above low-water mark in self-made pits. When harpooned they sometimes sink to the bottom and sink—a flounder habit. Naturally, most knowledge concerning them, is derived from their habit of frequenting the surface. In motion they turn somersaults, throwing the feelers out of water, and as they turn over exhibit the white stomach marked with ten gills, or bronchial apertures, five gills on each side. The tail comes up, a dive is made, and the operation is repeated, reminding one of the antics of a porpoise, which does not, however, keel over. If it happens that his motions are conducted below the surface, where even his white stomach is not visible, his presence is detected by the caldron of boiling water from below, where the harpoon has reached him. Devil fish travel sometimes in schools of twenty or more, often leaping entirely out of water. If approached by a boat they may dive and reappear again a mile or so to starboard.