



Volume 3, Issue 5

PAPHA Newsletter

May 2009

Museum touches Port A Youth

BY SYLVIA BUTTLER, PAPHA CORRESPONDENCE SECRETARY

As I walked down the hall in H. G. Olsen Elementary School the other day I read some student writing posted on a bulletin board. The fourth grade students had written poems and posted them for everyone to see. I asked Mrs. Adams what the assignment was and she explained, "The fourth graders have been studying a unit on poetry." After reading them the narrative poem, "I Have Heard of a Land," by Carol Thomas, students wrote their own narrative poems about Port Aransas.

As a native islander and serving as a board member for PAPHA, I was very moved and even became emotional as I read what they wrote. The two fourth grade classes were the first "school" classes to visit our new Port Aransas Museum when it opened in December 2008.

share two of the poems. The poems have not been edited for spelling errors – they are as the students wrote them. Enjoy!

These students are wonderful writers and I am so proud of all of their poems. I wasn't sure they understood the beauty and serenity of Port Aransas but, WOW they do!

See 'Youth Poems' on Page 4

I want to celebrate their writing and
Port Aransas

I live in a land
Where the dolphins follow the ferry
Careful to not hit the sides
People climb out of their cars
And stare in amusement
At the beautiful creatures
Who fly and fall, fly and fall
And land in the ocean

I live in a land
Where the oldest, most historic house
Was transformed into ur city museum
That was beautifully redisigned
Into a little white house
Fit for a president
Pictures, Slideshows, old used items,
All for Port A, Texas

I live in a land
Where the beach is always crowded
Where the sandcastles
Are eaten by the sea
Where the children squeal with lafter
And birds fly like vultures
Trying to take your food
And lifeguards are watching you
Keeping you safe

I live in a land
Where children almost live
At public parks and pools
And best friends
Don't want to leave each other
And kids spend almost
All their time together
And friendship never fades

By Bernie Harrison

United States Coast Guard Station Port Aransas

Dr. John G. Ford, Marker Chairman of the Nueces County Historical Commission announces a forthcoming ceremony to celebrate the installation of a State Historical Marker in Port Aransas. This marker recognizes and commemorates the 131 years of service rendered to Mustang Island by the personnel of the Aransas Life Saving Station and USCG Station Port Aransas. Installation of the marker, at Roberts Point Park, will be this summer, and announcement of the specific time and date will appear in this Newsletter and the *South Jetty*.

PUBLICATION OF THE PORT ARANSAS PRESERVATION AND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Editor, Pam Greene

PAPHA Board:

Nancy Phillips, president
Sharon Stricker, vice-president
John Fucik, secretary
Bruce Reynolds, treasurer
Sylvia Buttler
Mark Creighton
Randy D'Herde
Jane Gnazzo
Kristi Goldston
Herb Lancaster
Christina Milligan
Rick Pratt
Chris Shanklin

? ? ? ? ? ?

**YOU ASK,
PAPHA TELLS!**

What would you like to know about Port Aransas and Mustang Island?

Email question(s) to surfside1@charter.net.

(click on link above) [Please type "PAPHA" on subject line.]

Look on Page 3 for the answer to this month's questions!

? ? ? ? ? ?

Inside this Issue:

Fishing in Tarpon, TX..... Page 2
WW II, Closing Part..... Page 3
Focus On Page 3
ASK Answers Page 3
Wiki Port A Page 3
Closer Look Page 4
Winners Page 4

Fishing in Tarpon, Texas -- Special to the New York Times

Oct. 11, 1902

"Hi, Bud, mackerel bitin!" shouted a tall lusty boatman, striding down the beach.

Four or five men answered this summons by grabbing rods and starting for the little bay, fitting the joints as they went, while a small boy dashed on ahead, and picking up a cast net that was drying on the wharf, with a graceful whirl tossed it over with inimitable swing.

"Get any?" called out an angler.

"Betcher life," replied the boy, lifting up the net and shaking out dozens of big fat shrimp that danced up and down, standing on their horns, not exactly in delight at the prospect.

The cry of mackerel did not mean the ordinary mackerel of the Pacific or even the Atlantic, but the splendidly hued Spanish fish of the Mexican Gulf, a gamy creature of most exasperating habit, and in twenty minutes Aransas Pass, or that part of it directly opposite the town of Tarpon, was changed into a community of boats, each containing from one to four men or women, all strung out in a line or by twos on the edge of a singular mud line that came drifting in from the Gulf. The first man to get line out got the first fish. He had a gigantic pole, almost twenty feet in length, off a single tip, with a short line, and the way he snaked the fish in was a caution to sinners: at least this is the description that a Waco woman gave later on. The man bore a charmed life, and it is a wonder that no one was shot that day when he caught 260 mackerel while others got comparatively few. Yet every one caught the fish, and exciting sport it was. The mackerel ranged up to eight pounds, averaging five, and bit on the run, bending the light rods almost double as they rushed out into the pass, around the boats, to the confusion of others, and when six or eight people had the golden fish on at the same time the scene was engrossing and spirited.

Some of the fish leaped into the air—a flash of silver, a gleam of gold—to plunge down again into the channel. Faster grew the sport. Up they came. A shout from some woman angler, a yell from an up-the-state man who had never seen anything like it; then something happened. No one had a strike for several minutes, and all hands moved ten or fifteen feet out into the channel; but no bites; even the man with the colossal rod failed. Then came a scream from a woman angler, and not three feet from the boat, or her hand, rose a triangular fin of a deep dun color.

"Shark!" cried some one. The woman demanded to be put ashore at once. Her husband expostulated, the wife threatened hysterics, and in the meantime the shark, a monster of twelve or thirteen feet, judging from the fin, leisurely swam in and out among the boats, and utterly and

completely routed the Spanish mackerel.

"Some doggone idjit's let his fish hang over," said a boatman confidentially to the whole fleet, standing up and looking around to discover the victim, who was finally run down by the eagle-eyed boatman as a man from Dallas. "Why, look yer, son," he said, "that ain't no way to fish yer. You'll have every doggone shark in the gulf in no time. Fish fair, man, fish fair."

The Dallas visitor jerked in his string of Spanish mackerel just in time, as the big man eater came sailing along. The boatman, standing up, struck it a blow with the oar, which could be heard all over the fleet, but the shark paid little attention to it. Something had to be done, and one of the boatmen, making a megaphone of his hands, roared: "Bill, bring down your shark tackle!"

Bill was the occupant of a little sailboat, which now came down the pass, and proved to be the local taxidermist, who mounts hundreds of fish for the wealthy anglers who stop at Tarpon, Winter and Summer. When the tarpon anglers were out he cruised around, a sort of modern floating commercial Venetian, and took orders and the fish, which he stuffed so naturally that it was difficult to believe they were dead. Bill had a shark line, and being an obliging fellow, rounded to, anchored in the midst of the shark-infested fleet, and, hooking on several Spanish mackerel, provided by the victims, having bouyed up the line with a float, cast into the pass.

Evidently the shark had heard the conversation and had disappeared, but in a short time the piece of wood sank with a jerk; Bill gave a yell, and every boatman hauled at his anchor and pulled for Bill's boat, the Waco lady protested, but as Bill remarked afterward, she was lost in the shuffle. It happened that her boat fastened to Bill's first; the second made fast to it, and quicker than can be told a line of a dozen or more boats had formed; at the right moment Bill jerked the hook into the shark, and the procession moved on, with a rush that made the startled woman from Waco sit down; in fact, everybody went down as that shark got under way. Bill lay back and shouted to all hands to pull, but for the first few moments the shark had it all his own way and went sturdily out through the pass, headed for the open Gulf, much to the terror of the women and delight of the children. But presently one boat after another got its oars out and pulled, and finally stopped the monster, and then slowly edged in the beach.

"If I ever get on to that sand you'll never see me in a boat again," said the Waco female.

"That is what comes from taking women out fishing," retorted the man, meekly.

"There it is," snapped the woman. "Women

can't have any pleasure. Why didn't you go mullet fishin' so that your wife could go with you without risking her life?"

"Mulletts don't bite," said the boatman thinking to throw balm on the troubled waters.

"Well, that's just what I want," responded the woman, hysterically, "something that won't bite."

By this time the boat had grounded in shallow water. The boatman took some of the men in their arms and toted them ashore, and the boat of the woman of the mullets was dragged up, whereupon she made her way to a high sand dune and watched the proceedings. Bill had leaped into the water, and a dozen men laid hold of the line, and in a few moments were having the time of their lives with the shark that now, with a terrific jerk, carried them, knee deep, out on to the shoal; then they ran up the beach with it, with loud acclaim, to be almost jerked headlong by a particularly vicious rush of the shark, that was, if nothing, a good fighter.

For nearly a half hour the monster hauled the men about, gradually taking them up the beach. Finally some piles were reached, and the rope made fast about it, and the big shark taken slowly in. When it came to shoal water it was run up the sands with loud shouts, resenting the operation by snapping its jaws and bending into vicious curves, straightening out with marvelous power. Nearer it came until its gaping many toothed jaws were fully exposed around a mouth large enough to encompass a man. Clinging to its tawny hide were several remoras, or sucking fishes, which retained their position even after the spoiler of the Spanish mackerel fishing was high and dry on the sands.

This shark was ten or twelve feet long, and must have weighed 1600 pounds at least, and was a fair sample of the big sharks which follow large schools of game fish, preying upon them when occasion offers. Exactly how long a regular man eater grows is not known, but the Captain of the ship Raja captured one which measured 34 feet.

The shark had driven the Spanish mackerel away, so the anglers, excepting the woman from Waco, who walked home over the sand dunes, adjourned to the inner bay and fished for channel bass.



PAPHA archives

FOCUS ON ...

Each month a focus will shine on a different docent that volunteers to work for the Port Aransas Museum.



Karen and Marvin Murray

Karen and Marvin Murray moved to Corpus Christi seven years ago with a history of concerned conservation. While living for many years in San Antonio they were members of the Conservation Society and were involved in saving structures, such as the San Jose Mission.

Now, fortunately for us, the couple

is living in Port Aransas and still have their devotion for saving historic structures. That's how they became involved in the docent program for our museum.

The couple lives here because they love it. Their favorite thing to do is "have fun" and, or course, work at the museum. One fun event they have planned is a Caribbean Cruise with a couple of

friends from their college days.

Marvin also works as a volunteer at the Chamber of Commerce. He greets visitors and leaves them with a positive image of our town. Karen is a volunteer at the art center twice a month. The couple enjoy their life here and their volunteer work. The Museum Crew is happy they're here, too.

U-boat off the Aransas Pass

'CLOSING PART' OF A SERIES ON WORLD WAR II

BY JOHN G. FORD

Previously in this series, I gave a brief history of the World War II defense of the Aransas Pass (waterway) area by the U.S. Army. I would like to even out the record by describing the operations of the other military branches that served in Port Aransas.

After Congress declared war (December 8, 1941), Coastguardsmen at Station Port Aransas were ordered to conduct the PWCS—Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security—mission. A prominent part of that mission on Mustang Island focused on the 17 miles of deserted coastline, ideal for landing agents and saboteurs by submarine. To guard against such, the equine and canine Beach Patrol was initiated. While the patrol was initially based at the Station house, patrolling Coastguardsmen eventually bivouacked along the length of the Island in nine temporary hutments, each housing approximately 22 men.

The operations of the U.S. Navy on Mustang Island were the Harbor Entrance Control Post (HECP) and the crash boat. Many aviators learned to fly at the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi—Ensign George Bush earned his gold wings at NASCC. When a fledging aviator put his aircraft in the Gulf of Mexico, the aptly named crash boat (carrying a medical corpsman) sped from the Port Aransas docks to retrieve the dripping flyer.

Sailors in the HECP, located by the Engineers pier, monitored vessels entering the Aransas Pass. They also guarded against a potential threat going from the pass to the Gulf; namely, the re-supplying of U-boats by enemy sympathizers. To prevent that, commercial fishing vessels leaving the Aransas Pass were stopped and inspected for excess food and fuel.

The historian of each military unit serving in Port Aransas during World War II could have summarized his unit's record succinctly: No enemy activity observed in the assigned area of operations.

[John G. Ford is a local, award winning history writer. His book, A Texas Island, is offered at the Port Aransas Museum.]

WIKI PORT ARANSAS: USER BEWARE!

BY JOHN G. FORD

Wikipedia.org is a cyber information and history resource that pops up when you google—search—most any topic. Google "Port Aransas" and then click on the wikipedia site, wherein you will find these statements under History: "The Karankawa Indians led a nomadic existence, migrating from the mainland to the coast. One of the places they lived in on the coast was a small fishing village known as 'Sand Point' on what they called 'Wild Horse Island', later known 'Mustang Island.'"

Most assuredly, the Karankawa did not live in a small fishing village on an Island that they named, and "Sand Point" is just the front door to other—no wiki, FDR did not make two trips to Port A—notable errors about our illustrious history. I have begun the process to make things wiki right, but until that happens it is advisable to tag wiki Port Aransas with a big user beware warning.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

PAPHA answers the e-Questions

Rainrunner: Does the lighthouse look like the one leveled during the Civil War? The original (1857) lighthouse was not totally destroyed. The Confederates charged with blowing it up—to deprive the Federals—were given only 2 kegs of powder, not enough, thankfully, for a thorough job. (Damage repaired in 1867.)

Jacobina asks about the credibility of this story: A relative aboard a Navy ship says he watched President Franklin Roosevelt fishing near Port Aransas. That is certainly possible; a USN force—the vessels *Decouter*, *Moffett*, *Potomac*—transported FDR and entourage to and from Port A in May 1937. (You might, Jacobina, check those names against your relative's records.)

Phil wants to know about the turnouts he remembers being driven here as a child. A 1912 railroad bed from Aransas Pass to Harbor Island was asphalted over in 1931 for auto usage, and the turnouts were on eight, one-lane bridges.

Answers provided by John Guthrie Ford

TREAT YOURSELF OR A FRIEND WITH ANY OF THE TERRIFIC ITEMS IN OUR GIFT SHOP INSIDE THE MUSEUM - JEWELRY, CALENDARS, CANDLES, SOAPS, POTTERY, POSTCARDS, BOOKS, TOTE BAGS, T-SHIRTS, PHOTOS & MORE.

A Closer Look [at our Gift Shop]

Corrinne Van Veen:

Corrinne Van Veen uses hand blown glass beads in her beautiful jewelry. She works the lovely beads in with sterling silver and Svarvoski crystals. The special glass beads are made by her daughter.

In fact, Corrinne began her jewelry making career because her daughter would share with her some of the beads she was making.



Her daughter has two kilns and takes classes all over the state to further her abilities.

Corrinne and her husband Art, moved to Michigan from the Netherlands when they were married 62 years ago. They have lived in Port Aransas the last several years.

Corrinne's jewelry line includes necklaces, bracelets, earrings and lovely watches. They are available in the Port Aransas Museum Gift Shop.



Military, WW II

PAPHA archives



Lighthouse lens

PAPHA archives

Want to become involved?

PAPHA offers many opportunities: individuals, families & businesses can become members; be a docent; offer skill in any area (leave message at 749-3800)

And the winners are ...

In addition to the satisfaction for a job well done and being able to share their love of Port Aransas, some museum docents have earned an excursion to the Lydia Ann Lighthouse. Those with the most volunteer hours clocked at the museum, beginning January 1 through April 30, qualify for the trip. The excursion is planned for late May or early June.

The docents will be accompanied by Museum Director Rick Pratt and his wife Cameron, PAPHA President Nancy Phillips Director of Communications Pam Greene, CDocent Coordinator Mary Hammond-McKnight and her husband Jimmie.

Youth Poems—Cont. from Page 1

Port Aransas

I live in a land
Where the museum has historical facts
And tell a lot about our town
About the beach, jetties, and more
The museum is shining with fun

I live in a land
Where the dunes are as high as the sky
The pretty sand makes me feel warm
I play and have so much fun
I roll down the dunes with happiness

I live in a lan
Where the dolphins swim in the ocean
Their shining fin is bright
Brighter than anything in the world
They are lovable and spiritual animals

I live in a land
Where the birds are beautiful
Over the ocean they fly
Diving for fish and grabbing them
They fly and fly everywhere

I live in a land
Where coyotes howl to the moon
They are as loud as screams
They are mean and feisty
In our land they roam

By Ben Milligan

PAPHA
361-749-3800
portaransasmuseum.org
Museum hours:
Thurs-Sat, 1-5pm

Lunch will be prepared by Miss K's Catering and sponsored by Mark Grosse Real Estate, The South Jetty Newspaper and Popsicle Toes.

Special recognition is due to Linda Zahn, with more than 50 volunteer hours and Karen Larsen with more than 40 hours.

Additional winners with more than 30 hours of volunteering are: Bill Behrens, Maudine Butler, Kay Culpepper, Jack Dreessen, Karen Murray, Marvin Murray, Jan Novak, Joan O'Rourke, Pepper Pendzinski and Joyce Williams.

The time each docent volunteer gives is greatly appreciated by PAPHA, said President Nancy Phillips.