

# PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Pearland Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1333  
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Dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of "Old Pearland"

## President's Message

Once again on the fourth Saturday of **October**, the weather in **Pearland, Texas** was perfect and the 200 plus who attended the annual **Reunion Luncheon** had a great time. What fun it is to see those old friends we might not have seen since last year and renew those old friendships. Once again the barbecue from **Central Texas** was delicious; and once again if you missed the luncheon this year, make your plans now to attend next year.

We always appreciate **Mayor Tom Reid** bringing us up to date each year as to what is going on in what was once the little town of **Pearland**. It still boggles the mind to think **Pearland** now has close to 100,000 citizens. I think **Margie Wilson** spoke the truth when she said, "when I drive out west of town now, I need a road map to get back home." No matter how big **Pearland** becomes, I think most of us who attend these luncheons when we hear the word "**town center**" still think it means the corner of **Highway 35 and 518** with the old drugstore on one corner and the **Cross Roads Inn** on the other. I guess really the center of what is now **Pearland** would be somewhere around the corner of **518 and Cullen** where the old **Jollison Dairy** used to be; and when the **Jollison Dairy** was there it was about 4 miles from what we considered "**Town Center**".

The sad but touching part of the luncheon is the candle lighting ceremony where we remember our **Historical Society** members and old time **Pearlanders** who passed away since the last reunion.

Wow, here we are starting a new decade. Where in the world did the last ten years go? It seems like only last year or so that we were approaching the 21<sup>st</sup>

century and the Y2K alarmists were warning of dire disaster - - computers crashing , no electricity, no drinking water and neighbors fighting neighbors over food. It will be interesting to see what this next decade brings us. A little further in the **Newsletter** we will look back over the past 10 years and talk about what's happened in **Pearland** and with the **Historical Society**.

**Hope to see you at our meeting Tuesday night, Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> at the Knapp Center. Meeting starts at 7:00 P.M. Homemade cookies, coffee, soft drinks and visitation with old friends follows the meeting.**

Mickey Mark

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## AMONG OUR MEMBERS

As mentioned previously, the sad part of our **Reunion Luncheons** is the lighting of the candles in memory of **Society Members** and long time **Pearlanders** who passed away during the year since the last luncheon. Unfortunately, we have had a rash of unfortunate injuries, hospitalizations and deaths since our **October** reunion.

**Society Member Richard Bittick** passed away **December 2<sup>nd</sup>**. **Richard** was the next to youngest of the six **Bittick** boys who graduated from PHS. Anyone who ever attended the **Alvin Opry** will remember **Richard's** performance as a singer and comedian under the name of "**The Great Unknown**." He was preceded in death by brothers, **Gene and Garland Bittick**. **Richard, Guy, Dwight and Sammy Bittick** were all at our **Reunion Luncheon** last month. **Richard** was retired from the

local **Drainage District**. He will be remembered as a good guy with a great sense of humor.

**Society Member Betty Jane Cook Beauchamp** passed away December 27. **Betty Jane** was the eldest of the children of **Pearland** pioneers **Clayton and Allie Mae Cook**. She was a 1949 graduate of **PHS**. Sisters are **Geraldine (Geri), Pat and Gloria Jean**. Brother is **J. C. "Cotton" Cook**. **Betty Jane** was living in the historic **Cook** home on **Orange St.** when she had the stroke causing her death.

Another member of a pioneer **Pearland** family, **Society Member Virgle Wood Hawk**, passed away Jan. 7. Although **Virgle** had been living in an assisted living facility near her daughter in the **Woodlands**, she stayed in touch with all that was going on in **Pearland** and with the **Historical Society** and was a regular attendee at our annual luncheon. Those of you who remember riding the "big bus" out west of town will remember the **Wood** family dairy and home and remember the **Wood** girls.



**Virgle Wood Hawk at 08 Reunion Luncheon**

**Society Member** and early **Pearland PHS** home economics teacher, the beloved **Hazel Skinner Muetz**, passed away from pneumonia **Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>** after a short stay in the hospital. **Mrs. Muetz** was the last living teacher from the group of teachers hired by **Supt. B.B. Ainsworth** shortly after the high school opened in 1937. Many of the guys who graduated from **PHS** in the late 30's and early 40's had great memories of the dance classes taught by **Oleta Campbell Hawkins and Hazel Skinner Muetz**. **Hazel Muetz** always had some comments to add to the **Historical Society Luncheon** and was always a joy to visit with. The old high school is a **Texas Historic Landmark**. Those who were fortunate

enough to have attended **PHS** in those early years and to have had teachers such as **Hazel Skinner Muetz and Oleta Hawkins** along with **Fay Hunter, Billy Wall, Lloyd Hawkins** and **Steven Prensner** will always remember the dedication and love received from that group of teachers. **Mrs. Muetz** would have been 94 on **January 11<sup>th</sup>**.



**Oleta Campbell Hawkins and Hazel Skinner Muetz at the 07 Reunion Luncheon**

**Adeline West**, long time **Pearland** resident, and **Mother of Nolen West and Sally West Garner** died **October 28<sup>th</sup>** at the age of 95. Any of you who attended **PHS** athletic events over the past years will remember seeing **Adeline** in the stands if one of her grandkids or great grandkids were involved and there has seldom been an athletic event in which a **Garner** was not involved. It was told that one of her last statements two days before she died was that she hoped to be able to go to the game Friday night. The **Pearland Oilers** lost a faithful fan when **Adeline West** passed away.

**Bob Alexander**, next to youngest son of the long time **Pearland** area **Charles and Helen Alexander** family, passed away October 12<sup>th</sup>. **Bob** lived in **Pearland** for many years and was an **Alvin** resident at the time of his death. **Brothers Jack and John** preceded **Bob** in death as did his sister **Martha**. **Brothers Tom and Jud** and **Sisters Mary, Sue, Pat and Liz** are the living members of the **Alexander** family.

Long time **Pearland** resident **Dottie Watson** passed away **October 16<sup>th</sup>** after a long stay in **Windsong Nursing Home in Pearland**. **Dottie** was the wife of **Arnold Watson** and sister-in-law of **Historical Society Member Mamie Watson Williamson**.

Another member of a long time **Pearland** family, **Johnny Griffin**, passed away **October 23<sup>rd</sup>** after a long battle with cancer. **Johnny**, a 1961 graduate of **PHS**, was the oldest son of **Leroy”Pete” and Audrey Griffin**.

Former **Pearlander Melvin Rutherford** passed away Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>. **Melvin** was preceded in death by his wife **Lydia "Cooter" Smith Rutherford**. He is the brother of **Historical Society Member Lois Rutherford Cheek and Millie Rutherford Hood**

**Former Pearlander Les Sallee** passed away Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>. **Les**, a 1961 PHS grad was living in **Trinity, Texas** at the time of his death.

**Kim Waddle Cox**, daughter of **Frank Waddle** and niece of **Society Member Betty Waddle Calloway**, passed away **December 6<sup>th</sup>**. **Kim** was a 1978 PHS graduate. She was preceded in death by her Father **Frank Waddle** who passed away last **April 14<sup>th</sup>**.

**Jim Peirsol**, older brother of **Society Member Bob Peirsol**, passed away **December 31<sup>st</sup>**. **Jim** was a resident of **Austin** at the time of his death.

**Elaine Recker Morris**, sister of **Society Member Joan Recker Baker**, passed away in **Oklahoma** on **Jan 1<sup>st</sup>** after a long battle with cancer. **Elaine** did go to school in **Pearland** for a couple of years or so; but most remember her visits from **Oklahoma** where **Joan** and her sister **Louella Recker Smith** had lived prior to moving to **Pearland**.

Long time **Pearland** resident, **Marguerite Martin** passed away **Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>**. **Marguerite** had just celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday a week before her death.

Some of our members have been going through some rough times healthwise. Remember these in your prayers.

**Brenda Martin Riggs**, who does a fantastic job as **Historical Society Secretary**, is really in a health battle. **Brenda** started feeling bad back in **October**. She was losing weight and feeling really bad. She spent a short time in the hospital but it was not until shortly before **Christmas** when **Brenda** had to go back into the hospital did the doctors find that she had lymphoma. Since that time she has really been going through some trying times. She has started chemo and will probably be facing surgery and some

very rough days. Knowing **Brenda**, we all know she will not give in.

**Brenda’s Mother, Claudia Martin**, fell at her home on **Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>** and fractured vertebrae in her neck. The good news is that **Claudia** has recovered and is back to her old very active self. She is currently at **Colonial Oaks Assisted Living Facility** on the far west side of **Pearland**. **Claudia** will turn 91 this **March 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

Also at **Colonial Oaks**, in fact a next room neighbor to **Claudia**, is **Society Member Basil Cogbill**. **Basil** had neck surgery last **Oct.** and ultimately wound up in a wheel chair. **Carrie Mae** is also at **Colonial Oaks** in the memory care area. Most of you will remember **Basil and Carrie Mae** had been living in **Fredricksburg**. **Basil** turned 92 last **Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>**.

Another who never gives up is **Rose Mary Raney**. **Rose Mary** is now living in an assisted living facility in **Brownwood** near her daughter, **Linda**. **Rose Mary** was missed at our **Reunion Luncheon** this year.

Those of you on our e-mail list will recall receiving a prayer request for **Society Member Mamie Watson Williamson**, who at 96 is one of our oldest members, awhile back. It is great to report that **Mamie** has greatly improved and according to her daughter, **Sandra Jones**, she is again participating in activities at **Windsong Nursing Home**.

Let’s continue to hold these members in our prayers.

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**PEARLAND’S OLDEST MALE NATIVE BORN CELEBRATES 90<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**

**Society Member David Scott**, **Pearland’s** oldest native born citizen will turn 90 on **Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>**. Our oldest native born citizen, **Emma Jamison Wells**, turned 96 last **November 1<sup>st</sup>**. Happy Birthdays to our oldest male and oldest female native born **Pearlanders**.

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*This doesn’t apply to David and Emma; but have you noticed people telling you, “You look great”; and then adding “for your age.”*

## A WORD OF THANKS

For many years the attendees at our **Reunion Luncheon** have enjoyed some very good home grown apples provided by **Historical Society Member George Cates**. **George** and his lovely wife, **Helen Benes Cates** started the tradition of bringing a crate of home grown apples from their orchard in **Missouri** many years ago; and even after **Helen** passed away **George** has continued that very nice and enjoyable tradition. Thanks, **George**, from all us apple lovers.



George Cates, the man who brings the apples every year.

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### What's Happening

Guidelines for the selection of **Pearland Historical Society** historic homes in old **Pearland** were established by a committee headed by **Dwight Bittick**. Starting in 2010, the number of homes to be selected each year, the appropriate plaques, and financing of the plaques will have to be established.

Election of officers will have to be done in **April** for 2 year terms. We really need to try to get younger members involved not only in the **Society** but also as officers; so if you know of any younger members you think would make good officers let us know.

The **Historical Society** members almost unanimously voted to keep the old depot at its present location for use as a **Historical Museum**. Establishing and setting up a museum will take a lot of volunteer work. Hopefully we will have plenty of volunteers.

We will need to file the application for a **Texas State Historical Marker for Hunter Park on Orange St.**

Our **Historical Society** will continue to co-ordinate with the "**Old Townsite Group**" and the **Pearland Parks and Recreation Department** to improve "**Old Pearland**."

We will be honoring the **PHS** graduating class of 1960 at our annual luncheon this fall. We will have to contact those graduates.

2010 promises to be a very busy year for our **Historical Society**. Your participation is needed.

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### Susan Smith Lenamon Receives Citizenship Cup Award

Congratulations are in order for **Society Member Susan Smith Lenamon**. **Susan** recently received the **Citizenship Cup Award** from the **Houston Association of Realtors** for her outstanding contribution to her community. Please see the story below:

*It was announced by Vicki Fullerton, President of Houston Assn. of Realtors that Susan S. Lenamon will be awarded the 2009 John E. Wolf Citizenship Cup Award from the Houston Association of Realtors (HAR) on December 16, 2009 at the annual REALTOR celebration at the Hilton Hotel Americas. The award is for making outstanding contributions to the community, primarily outside the scope of the real estate industry. Criteria for the award include leadership and service in: charitable organizations, service organizations and special service organizations. Honoring 1938-1939 HAR President James E. Wolf, the award is presented annually to a member of exemplary reputation. John E. Wolf Citizenship Cup Award from the Houston Association of Realtors (HAR) on December 16, 2009 at the annual REALTOR celebration at the Hilton Hotel Americas. The award is for making outstanding contributions to the community, primarily outside the scope of the real estate industry. Criteria for the award include leadership and service in: charitable organizations, service organizations and special service organizations. Honoring 1938-1939 HAR President James E. Wolf, the award is presented annually to a member of exemplary reputation.*

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## Keeping Pearland Ladies Beautiful

Some time back we had a story about the **O'Day Water Well Drilling Company** being the oldest continuously operating business in **Pearland**. It was started in 1912 by **Mr. Pat O'Day**, grandfather of **Society Members Suzanne O'Day Elliott and Mike O'Day**. The oldest continuous operating business in the **Old Pearland Townsite** is **Jo An's Beauty Salon** on the corner of **Broadway and Grand Blvd.** **Joan Recker Baker** bought a small house at that site and started her beauty shop in 1954; so she has been continuously beautifying **Pearland** for 55 plus years, long before we even had a "**Keep Pearland Beautiful.**" Below is **Joan's** own story of starting her long running business.



Jo An's Beauty Salon

### Jo An's Story

*In 1949 I was walking down 518 about a block and a half east of the Pearland Drug Store. I was in front of a house where the Mark family lived when I looked across the shell road at a little white house where Posy Palmer and her son L. A. Martin lived. Posy operated the Cross Roads Inn on Main Street between Jess & Mabel Kliesing's grocery store and Jack Miller's filling station. I never thought that I would live so much of my life in that little white house. Louise and J. D. Mahanay built the house in 1936.*

*I went to beauty school at Houston Beauty College in the summers of 1949 and 50 and finished high school at Alfalfa, Oklahoma in 1951. I worked in Houston and Tulsa and then back in Pearland.*

*My sister, Luella Smith and her husband, Smitty, owned the drug store with beauty shops attached. (First one in the back of the store, and later one to the side of it.) I worked there at the beauty shop and drug store for awhile. Then one day Luella and Ida Nichols, Carleen Mark's mother, decided that Carleen should come back to work at the drug store; Ida should take a job at the phone office just east of the drug store; and I should move to Marie Davis' house and beauty shop on Pear Street just west of the railroad track where Ida had worked.*

*The building was originally built for a church. The sides slanted in at the top and shook every time a train went by. My son, Lynn, cried each time the train went by. Finally Gladys Beck told me if I would act as if the train were nothing Lynn would not cry. (That worked!) I took care of Ida's patrons the best I could until my second son, Allie, was born. (I remember giving Inez Farmer a permanent the day he was born.)*

*Two weeks later, the first of November in 1954, my parents, Rachel and Beecher Recker, and I bought the little white house on the corner of Broadway and Grand from the Snellins. Frederick and Anna Jean Ellis were nice enough to move so that my brother, Wayne Recker could build a beauty shop on the end of it. For awhile in 1955, 56 and 57 I had the only beauty shop in Pearland, Manvel, Friendswood, Brookside and Hastings Camp.*

*I really have good memories of the families in the area. Everyone was so supportive of me. No matter what happened they all helped me. Marilee Miller held my boys on her lap while I fixed hair. Mildred Long read stories to my children. The school teachers came over after school in the afternoons. They always helped support my shop and looked out for my children.*

*I loved for Grandma Garner to come to the shop. She told me about surviving the 1915 storm with her family in waist deep water. She said they held on to the fence so they wouldn't wash away. Josie Heflin brought plants for my yard that she had propagated and told me stories about Pearland that may never be published unless the names are changed to protect the innocent.*

*I've had a lot of fine operators. Some I can't remember their names; but I want to name the ones that I can. Margie Avant, Elaine Recker Morris, Marietta Hawk Mosher, Johnnie Christofferson, Jerri Ybarbo, Carol Sue Sanders, Sue Sparks, Kathy Cowger, E. J. Matlock, Terry Gibbons Koontz, James Humphries, Helen Nicholson, Fannie Jones, Loreen Johnson, Virginia Fernandez, Tubby Lopez, Carlene Jamison, Mary Jane Grey and Willene Tindall and her daughter Drenda. Willene began helping me with my children and working in my beauty hop as soon as she moved in. She fit right in because she had worked as an assistant at a beauty shop in the Hotel Fredonia in Nacogdoches.*

*Then in 1966 Willene finished her cosmetology training at Agnew Beauty School; and she has been working with me most of the time since. We've enjoyed good times together. I understand why so many people want to come to Pearland. There are a lot of good people who grew up in Pearland. I've watched six generations of Pearland's original families come and go since I've been here. Most of them have been in my shop at one time or another. JoAn's Beauty Shop is a good place to come if you've been away for awhile and need to find a lost friend.*



**Willene Tindall and Joan Recker Baker**

Thanks, JoAn for that interesting story and a good bit of old Pearland history.

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### **Another Bit of History**

With the passing of **Mrs. Hazel Muetz**, the last of the early **Pearland** teachers, it brought to mind

another story I suspect many other long time **Pearlanders** thought about. Sometime in the early 40's, a young doctor by the name of **Walter Muetz** opened his office behind the corner drug store. **Dr. Muetz** came to the U.S. in 1940 after fleeing from **Vienna** and the **Nazi** regime in 1939. He had spent 7 months in a refugee camp in **England** prior to his coming to the **U.S.** When **Dr. Muetz** came to **Pearland** he was in his early 30's. He became a **United States** citizen in 1944. He fulfilled a real need in **Pearland** and was an extremely popular physician. Sometime in the early 40's, probably around 1944, **Dr. Walter Muetz** married the pretty and popular **Pearland** high school home economics teacher, **Hazel Skinner**. The **Muetz** made their home in a house on **East Houston St.** just south of what is now the **Pearland State Bank** parking lot. Within a couple of years, **Dr. Muetz** moved his practice and his home to **Garden Villas**. Although he was in **Garden Villas**, a majority of **Pearland** citizens still considered **Walter Muetz** as "their" doctor. The move to **Garden Villas** made **Dr. Muetz'** drive to **St. Joseph Hospital** much quicker and easier. Over the next several years, the **Muetz** had three children – a daughter **Susan** and two sons, **Richard** and **Eric**. **Dr. Muetz'** drive to **St. Joseph's** was made easier when the **Gulf Freeway** was extended to **Gulfgate**. On **Wednesday, April 4, 1956**, **Mrs. Muetz** received the tragic news that her husband had been killed in a wreck on the **Gulf Freeway**. Not only was that news surely devastating to **Hazel Muetz**; but it also was a shock to all **Pearlanders** and also resulted in a major change to the **Gulf Freeway**. Prior to the wreck the outbound and inbound lanes of the **Gulf Freeway** were only separated by an esplanade. In the wreck which killed **Dr. Muetz**, an off duty policeman was driving fast and recklessly on the inbound lane when his car jumped the esplanade and hit **Dr. Muetz'** car head on. **Dr. Muetz'** car exploded in flames killing him instantly. After the wreck the **City of Houston** put up a chain link fence between the outbound and inbound lanes of the **Gulf Freeway**.



**Dr. Muetz** and picture of wreck from the **Houston Post**. **Hazel Muetz** remained a widow for the next almost 54 years. She touched many lives in **Pearland** and will always be in our memories.

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### Local Scouts Give Historic Cemetery a Facelift

The “**Old Settler’s Cemetery**” on **Halik Road** recently received a facelift as some 26 scouts from local **Troop 468** along with 7 adults worked for more than half a day cleaning old tombstones, mulching around trees and putting in a meditation area with a bench, trees, and several rose bushes. Several area businesses donated materials for this project: **Wayne’s Landscape Supply**, **Pearland Ace Hardware**, **Yardmaster Landscaping**, **Albertson’s Refrigeration and Total Safety Supply**. Donations were also made by **Sarah Adams** and **Bobby and Merriam Lowther**.

The facelift was an **Eagle Scout** project for 17 year old **Scout Wesley Burns**, son of **Mike and Martha Burns** of **Pearland**. **Wesley**, with the permission of the **Pearland Parks Department** and **Pearland Historical Society**, led the group of scouts in cleaning approximately 50 tombstones, mulching about 30 trees and building a scenic meditation area. **Wesley** officially passed the board of review and became an **Eagle Scout** on **December 10**.



**Boy Scout Troop 468 at Pearland’s historic “Old Settlers Cemetery”**

The “**Old Settler’s Cemetery**” was established as a **Texas State Historical Site** on **October 1, 1988**. The community cemetery was begun with the burial

of pioneer **Echolean C. Ackerly** who died August 11, 1894. Four years later **Mrs. Ackerly’s** burial site and surrounding area was officially dedicated as a cemetery. In years past, prior to the cemetery being maintained by the **Pearland Parks Dept.**, **Pearland** area **Boy Scouts** have from time to time cleared weeds from the cemetery.

The **Pearland Parks Dept.** maintains the cemetery, but in the past cleaning of the tombstones has been done by an outside contractor. The facelift given by **Troop 468** was the first time gravestones have been cleaned by the **Scouts**. The **Pearland Historical Society** has expressed its sincere appreciation to **Wesley Burns** and **Troop 468** for the outstanding job done at this historic site. **Scoutmaster for Troop 468** is **Bendel Rushing**, a **1975 Pearland High graduate**



**Eagle Scout Wesley Burns**



**Tombstone of Mrs. Echolean Ackerly**  
**First person buried at Old Settler’s Cemetery – August 11, 1894**

The “**Old Settler’s Cemetery**” is one of five historic **Pearland** sites so designated by **Texas Historical Commission** Markers. Others are “**The Old Depot**” at 3519 **Liberty Drive**; “**The Old 1937 High School**”, “**The First Methodist Church**”; and “**Zychlinski Park**” all on **Grand Boulevard**.





**Membership Form - - Pearland Historical Society**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ covering membership dues of \$15 per person for the following persons for the year 2010. Is this a gift membership?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: Dues paid in the last quarter of the year cover the following year.**

**Mail to: Pearland Historical Society, P.O. Bo 1333, Pearland, Texas 77588**

**Please note: If you are paying for gift memberships, please give the name and address of the person who is presenting the gift so that we can notify the recipient.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

