

PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Editor: John D. "Mickey" Mark

E-mail: mark325@prodigy.net

Pearland Historical Society

P. O. Box 1333

Pearland, Texas 77588

Dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of "Old Pearland"

President's Message

As the years pass, the term "old time **Pearlander**" begins to take on a different connotation. Each edition of the "Newsletter" has the sad news of the passing of many of our older **Historical Society** members and with their passing a bit of "old time" **Pearland** history also passes. One of the really good things **Pearland High School** did was in **1962** to publish the silver anniversary edition of the **Oiler** yearbook. The yearbook has pictures of the first 25 graduating classes of **PHS**. In looking back in the **Silver Anniversary** yearbook, it is really is stunning to look at the classes of the 30's and 40's and even the 50's and see how few of those graduates are still with us. Since the last **Newsletter** we lost **Society Member Dorothy "Dot" Miller Cortemeglia class of 1939**, longtime **Pearlander Lyle Martin, class of 1942**, **Society Member Mary Helen Miller, class of 1960** and **Betty Lynn Raney, class of 1946**.

A little further in this **Newsletter**, you will read about **Society Member Ann Lane Crosswhite** donating a group of **Pearland "Gusher"** newspapers to our **Historical Society**. Some of the **Gushers** came from the office of the first **PHS Superintendent B. B. Ainsworth** and some were written during the **1937 – 38** school year. **Dwight Bittick** has scanned them and put the scanned pages in a book and also made a DVD. This is a

priceless contribution to our **Historical Society**.

Now back to the original thought about being an "**old time Pearlander**." There are fewer and fewer of those of us who have actual memories of the way the town of **Pearland** was back in the 30's, 40's and even 50's. It is very important we do try to save those old memories. As we all grow older, let's all try to make sure the kind of memorabilia **Ann** donated to our **Historical Society** doesn't get trashed but is saved for future generations to learn about the days gone by.

As most are aware we will be honoring the class of **1963** at our **Reunion Luncheon** this fall. We really do need names of mailing addresses of the graduates of **1963** so we can mail out invitations (hopefully by June 15th.) If you know the name and address of a **1963 PHS** grad, please e-mail me the information.

Don't forget our quarterly meeting, **Tuesday, April 16th**, at 7:00 P.M. at our new home on **Galveston Street**.

Mickey Mark

What's Happening

In the **January Newsletter**, we mentioned that the application for a **Texas Historical Marker** for **Robert L and Julia Martin Hunter Park**

on **Orange Street** had been approved by the **Brazoria County Historical Commission** and forwarded to the **Texas Historical Commission**. We have received notification from the **Texas Historical Commission** that it has also been approved by the **THC**. We paid the **Texas Historical Commission \$1800** for the marker and post. Now we are awaiting word from the **Commission** about the wording on the marker. Although the narrative was written by **Society Member Tom Hunter**, the **Texas Historical Commission** will submit the wording which will be on the marker. Hopefully we will have the opportunity to edit the wording before the marker is done.

Work continues at the **Historical Society Home** on the historical timeline of **Pearland** and also on history of **Pearland Schools**. A group of members has been working most **Wednesday** nights on these projects. Progress is being made although it has been quite slow. **Carl Talbot** has been the primary worker on the timeline and **Karen Corron** on the history of the schools. **Ray Kliesing** has been manning the computer to provide info **Carl** and **Karen** need. **Luther Cunningham** stained and installed the railings for the time line posters. In looking up the word progress in the dictionary there is one example of a sentence using the word progress in regards to a project. That sentence reads *“The project showed slow but steady progress.”* This pretty much summarizes our **Wednesday** nights work.



Timeline pictorial history of Pearland by the decades on west wall.



A pictorial history of the growth of the Pearland Independent School District on east wall.

Among our Members

As previously mentioned we again have lost several **Historical Society** members since the last **Newsletter**.

Society Member and very long time **Pearlander, Helen Ferri**, passed away **January 28th**. **Helen** was 88 years old. She is preceded in death by her parents, **John and Margaret Martin**; her husband, **Baptist Ferri**; brothers, **William and Joe Martin**, and sisters, **Annie Duval, Mary Christensen, and Deckla Halik**.



Helen Ferri

Society Member Dorothy “Dot” Miller Cortemeglia passed away in early **February**. **Dot** was a **1939 PHS** grad; and the daughter of **Berry Miller, Sr**. Although **Dot** had not lived in **Pearland** in many years she often sent e-mails commenting on stories in the **Historical Society Newsletter**.

On **March 5th**, **Dot’s** niece **Society Member Mary Helen Miller** passed away after a long

and tough battle with cancer. **Mary Helen**, a **1960 graduate of PHS**, kept her sense of humor and interest in **Pearland** and in our annual reunions throughout all the rough times she had in battling her cancer. She was preceded in death by her parents, **Berry Jr. and Joy Miller** and brother "**Bo**".

Society Member Betty Lynn Stevens Raney passed **March 14th** also after a long and courageous battle with supra-nuclear-palsy, a very debilitating disease. Through it all, with the help of husband **Herman** and all the children, **Betty** kept her upbeat attitude. **Betty** was a **1946 PHS** grad and was a person everyone enjoyed.



Betty Lynn Stevens Raney

All of these **Society Members** will be greatly missed and will be remembered in our candle lighting ceremony at our annual **Reunion Luncheon** in **October**.

We also lost several long time **Pearlanders**. **1942 PHS** grad **Lyle Martin** passed away **March 7th** in a assisted living facility in **Georgetown, Texas**. **Lyle** was the youngest son of **Roy Forrest Martin Sr. and Fannie Catlin Manor Martin** and grandson of **Pearland pioneer family Samuel Pleasant and Elmira Munsell Martin**. He is survived by his wife **Marlene Martin**; sons: **Lyle "Sonny" Manor Martin, Jr.** and wife, **Cindy of Stephenville** and **Russel Martin** and wife, **Sauna of Liberty Hill**; sister: **Evelyn Martin Lawhon**. **Lyle** was predeceased by his son **Geren Martin**; brothers, **Warren, Glenn and Roy "Dude" Martin, Jr.** and sisters: **Eve Martin and Eunice Jones**.

Longtime **Pearlander Jasper Vitale** passed away **Jan. 20th**. Most of you will remember **Jasper** better as "**Big Humphrey**" the owner and ever present manager of **Big Humphrey's** restaurant on the west side of **Pearland**. Anytime you ate at "**Big Humphrey's**" (which by the way has good food) you would find **Jasper** at the cash register; and he always had a humorous remark for you as you paid and left.

Ola Dee Tindall Hassell passed away **Feb. 7th** in **Maine**. **Ola** is survived by her sons **Don Keefer of Maine, David Keefer of Mississippi**, daughter **Rona Johnson Mahoney** and brothers **George Tindall and Earl Spurgeon**. **Ola** was predeceased by her daughter **Rosie Johnson Allen** and brother **Bryant**.

1965 PHS graduate, **Harry Thompson**, passed away **March 9th** in **Austin**. **Tom Hunter** mentioned that **Harry** had provided some humorous memories of the 62 football season in the story **Tom** wrote for the **Jan.** issue of the "**Newsletter**." One memory **Harry** provided which will be a part of **Pearland** history are the pictures of old **Pearland** he took from the top of the old "golf ball"

More About Our Members

Some of our members have gone through some recent health problems.

Armilda Nichols Hall went through shoulder surgery on **Jan. 31** to repair torn ligaments. She is doing well and is going through therapy. **Armilda** was in a sling on her right shoulder for several weeks which is a real headache for a right handed person – which she is.

In early **March Sidney Kliesing** was rushed to **Southeast Memorial Hospital** and then life flighted to the medical center with what appeared to be an aneurysm of the brain. It turned out it was not an aneurysm; but he did

have some bleeding in the brain. Fortunately **Sidney** has no type of paralysis and is recovering at home.



**Corky Segelquist & Sidney Kliensing
At Zychlinski Park Dedication.**

Also around **March 8th**, **Juanita Stone Sutherland** fell asleep driving on **Scarsdale Blvd.** and hit a utility pole. Her ankle was shattered. Her ankle required plates and screws and a bone graft to mend all the pieces back together. After a few days in the hospital, **Juanita** is recovering nicely and is now in rehab at **Clear Brook Crossing, 10800 Flora Mae Meadows Rd. Houston, TX 77089 832-328-2350**

Many of our members have inquired about **Society Member Bettye Alexander's** condition. As most of you are aware, **Bettye** had a stroke sometime back and has been undergoing therapy. **Bettye's** nephew, **Society Member Johnnie Bill Alexander**, advises that **Bettye** has been back in her home in **Pearland** for a couple of months where she is being looked after by her daughter, **Cindy** and son, **Tom, Jr.** and their families. She also has caregivers and therapists coming in to help with her care. **Johnnie** advises her recovery has been slower than the family would have hoped; but they are recently encouraged by her progress. The family says **Bettye** would welcome a visit or maybe a note from her friends. Her contact information is:

**Bettye Alexander
3208 Nottingham
Pearland, Texas 77581
713 703-9516 (cell - Cindy)**

Please keep these members and any others who are going through health problems in your prayers.

Society Member Evelyn Martin Lawhon, 1943 PHS graduate is now in an assisted living facility in **Georgetown, Texas** near her nephew **Russell Martin (Lyle's son)**. **Evelyn's** address is **The Lodge @ Rocky Hollow, 1650 CR 245, Georgetown, Texas 78633**. We all wish **Evelyn** well, and miss her in **Pearland**.



Evelyn Martin Lawhon with brother Roy "Dude" Martin at first "Old Settlers Reunion".

And now for a couple of good news items:

Society Member **David Smith** has another great grandchild – No. 16 - -**WOW!!!!** **Ann Marie Bateman** was born **January 30th** weighing in at 9 lbs., 10 oz. **AnnMarie's** parents are **Chip and Vanessa Bateman**, grandparents are **Leah and Dwight Bateman**. **David** spent a little time in the hospital back in **Feb.** with a colon problem; but reports he is feeling good now.

(**Editor's Note: I believe I have raised this question before; but do we have any member who can equal or exceed 16 great grandchildren? I believe the answer was "negative".**)

Society Member Larry Phillips underwent knee replacement surgery **Feb. 7th**; and from

what we are hearing from **Larry** don't be surprised if he is running a marathon soon. **Larry** reports he has done fantastically well since the day of the surgery. The surgeon wanted **Larry** to be able to walk 150 yards before he would release him from the hospital. The day after the surgery, **Larry** walked 300 yards twice so the surgeon said, "let him go." No big surprise to those of us who know **Larry**.

Society Member Margie Lawrence celebrated her 92nd birthday on **March 27th**. Congratulations, **Margie**, you have been an inspiration to those you taught and to those who have known you for many years.

Pearland's oldest native born male citizen, **Society Member David Scott** turned 93 on **January 16th**.

Your Trash Might be our Treasure

Since we got a home for the **Pearland Historical Society** in the old high school administration building we have been accumulating a lot of old photos, papers, books, etc. which previously had been cluttering someone's home. Recently **Society Member Ann Lane Crosswhite** found a few old **Pearland High School "Gusher"** newspapers which her **Mother, Elaine Lane**, had saved from her days of being secretary to the school superintendent. What makes these "**Gushers**" so priceless is a couple of issues go back to the **1937-38 PHS** school year, the first year **Pearland** had a high school after high school students going to **Webster** for 22 years. Thanks to **Ann** and also thanks to **Society Member Dwight Bittick** who scanned all the pages and put them into a binder with sheet protectors and also made a DVD disc of them. Perhaps other members have old documents, papers or photos you were considering tossing. Look them over and if you think they have some historical value, let us take a look at them before you trash them.

In these high tech days, high school students cannot imagine the work involved in producing the 15 page "**Gusher**" in the fall of 1937. Many of our members will remember that for each page a draft would have to be typed on an old manual typewriter. The draft would then be proof read; and then a stencil would have to be typed (we always said "cut"); and then the stencil would be placed on the mimeograph machine, coated with ink and hand cranked to print that page. If the ink was not just right, the page would come out blurred or too light. It was not an easy process.

The editor of the "**Gusher**" in the fall of 1937 was **Margurite Massey** now **Margurite Massey Smith**. Also **Margurite's** name was mentioned as being the high scorer in one of the girls basketball games. Other issues among those **Ann** donated were a few issues in **1940, 1941, and 1945**. We do have some more issues from the late 40's and early 50's which also need to be scanned and placed on DVDs. They all truly are treasures.

One of the questions we **Historical Society** members are often asked is "how do you know when you are considered an old time **Pearlander**?" There are a lot of answers to that question like if you can remember eating 10 cent hamburgers at the old **corner drugstore**, you are an old time **Pearlander**. Several old time **Pearlanders** reminded me of one thing we haven't mentioned as being something only an old time **Pearlander**; and that would be the distinctive old water tower which looked like a golf ball sitting on a tee. The water tower which was on **Texas Avenue** right behind what is now the **Pearland Neighborhood Center** was an eye catcher to motorists who slowed down for the blinking yellow caution light at **Main and Broadway**. For the citizens of **Pearland** it was a reminder of the progress the little community of **Pearland** had made in the late **40's**.

In 1985, **Dorothy Long Cook** wrote an article for the **Pearland Historical Society**

Newsletter entitled “**Do You Remember**”. **Dorothy**, whose family came to **Pearland** in the early **1900’s**, was a **1939 graduate** of **Pearland High School** and for many years was **City Secretary** for the **City of Pearland**. **Dorothy** passed away in **October of 2011**. In **Dorothy’s** story she traced the history of **Pearland** as she remembered it growing up in and living in **Pearland** all her life. Reading **Dorothy’s** story of her life in **Pearland** brought back the memory of the golf ball water tower.



Thanks to Dorothy Long Cook, longtime Pearlander and long time City Secretary, who originally provided history of the Water District. Dorothy passed away in October, 2011

Prior to **Pearland** citizens voting in **1949** to create a **Water Control and Improvement District**, practically every home in the town had a water well, probably drilled by **O’Day Water Well Drilling Co.**, which today is the oldest continuous operating business in **Pearland** having been started by **Mr. Pat O’Day** in **1912**. A good number of homes along with a water well had a septic system to handle sewage. Many homes did not have a septic system and had an outhouse (privy) outback. Back in the 40’s the tradition of **Halloween “Trick or Treat”** simply did not exist. It was all “**trick**”; and the favorite trick of a lot of teen age boys was to go around town shoving over outhouses. It was not unusual on the morning after **Halloween** to look along a back alley and see several outhouses lying on their sides. That was one of the benefits of the new **Water District** – no more outhouses.

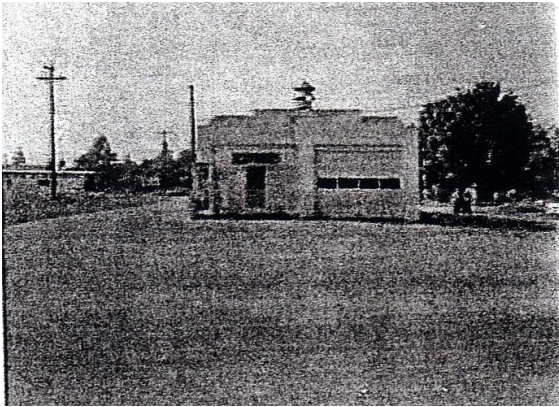
Dorothy recalled that in **December of 1949**, the new **Water District** called a bond issue for

\$260,000 for the purpose of constructing a waterworks and sanitary sewer system and for the drilling a water well and for erecting a 50,000 gallon elevated water tower which was completed in **June of 1950**. The cost of constructing the tower was **\$16,000**. (About the price of a good used car in 2013). The water district which covered all of the **Pearland** old town site originally employed three persons - - two in the office and one for maintaining the system. Until **Pearland** voted to incorporate in **1959**, the **Water Board** was the only government entity in **Pearland**. After incorporation, the new City covered approximately 2 square miles. At the first election in **1960**, **E. T. Gibbons** was elected as **Pearland’s** first Mayor. The first elected **City Councilmen** were **Tom Alexander, L. C. Hawkins, W. E. Parker, David Smith and Victor Nolen**. **Jack Miller** was elected as **City Constable**. The first police chief and first paid employee of the **City of Pearland** was **R. V. Johnson**. At the time of **Pearland’s** incorporation the population was listed as **1467**. (Editor’s Note: Mayor Reid says we are now over **100,000** and the **Houston Chronicle** recently stated that **Pearland** was the **15th** fastest growing city in the U.S.A.)

The original point of this story was that if you remembered the old “**golf ball**” water tank you surely were an “**old time Pearlander.**” The rest of the story sort of clarifies why it was there. Another good question is “when was the old tower torn down.” So far we don’t have that answer. Maybe later.



Picture taken on 2300 Block of Main St. with golf ball water tank in background on 2300 Block of Texas west of the railroad. The quonset hut looking building in the background was just south of Mrs. Cunningham's ice house and was the home of Pearland Justice of the Peace J. R. Bourne. Driving the car is John "Little Boy" Cunningham (owner), front seat passenger is Charles "Red" Nichols, back seat is Robert Bristow. (Editor's Note: This picture is also one which was presented to the Historical Society) This is the tower Harry Thompson climbed and took pictures of "old Pearland".



Another picture which will bring back memories of the days of the golf tee water tower is this picture of the old fire station and tax office which sat in the middle of the esplanade on the west side of Broadway and Grand. The building barely visible in the background was Garner's Cleaners.

In the story about the old golf ball water tower we mentioned things which you know might make you a "Pearland old timer." Below are some things if you remember you definitely are a "Pearland old timer". Sort of like Jeff Foxworthy's "you might be a redneck if."

You Definitely Are a Pearland Old Timer If:

1. *You remember when Pearland had only one blinking traffic light in the whole town at the intersection of Main and Broadway.*
2. *You remember when Pearland had a real ice house. That is an ice house (not a*

beer joint) that was a real ice house which Mrs. Cunningham ran on Main Street in a building which is one of very few old buildings still standing in old Pearland.

3. *You remember when all the kids in the Pearland school district went to school at one campus – the one which is now occupied by Alvin Community College on Grand Blvd.*
4. *You remember getting a hamburger and malt at the old corner drugstore at Main and Broadway for about 30 cents total.*
5. *You remember going to church at the First Baptist Church when it was still in what was previously the Suburban Gardens Hotel on Main St. just west of the railroad.*
6. *You remember driving to the football games at the field on Galveston Street where you drove your car right up to the sidelines to watch the Oilers six-man team.*
7. *You remember Sunday afternoon town team baseball games at what is now Zychlinski Park on Grand Blvd. when most of the town turned out to watch.*
8. *You remember all the kids in grade school and high school standing in the courtyard first thing every school day and reciting the pledge of allegiance as the U. S. flag was raised.*
9. *You remember when taking the bus to Alvin to attend the "movies" was big time entertainment.*

10. *You remember when the Pearland School District had only two school buses. The “big bus” picked up all the kids in the district who lived west of Highway 35 and the “little bus” picked up all who lived east of 35.*

Brazoria County Historical Museum’s “Brick and Beam Historic Structures” Tour

The old 1937 Pearland High School will be part of the **Brazoria County Historical Museum’s** tour of historic structures May 18th.



Old Pearland High School



Texas Historical Marker at Old High School

The tour will start in **Alvin** at the old **Aldridge Smith House** and will include the **Alvin Train Depot, the Schuster House** and the old **Pearland High School**. The tour group is

scheduled to be at the high school at 11:30 A.M. We will present about a 15 minute prepared program with about 15 minutes for questions. The program is scheduled to end at 12:00 P.M.

DON’T FORGET OUR QUARTERLY MEETING, TUESDAY, APRIL 16TH STARTING AT 7:00 P.M. HOPEFULLY WE WILL HAVE A PEARLAND LION’S CLUB SPOKESMAN WHO WILL GIVE US A SHORT PRESENTATION. COFFEE, COLD DRINKS, HOMEMADE COOKIES AND VISITATION WILL FOLLOW THE MEETING. SEE YOU THERE.

I recently ran across these gems from President Abraham Lincoln which are certainly apropos today.

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift.

You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.

You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer.

You cannot further the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred.

You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich.

You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than you earn.

You cannot build character and courage by taking away a man’s initiative and independence.

You cannot help men by permanently doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.

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 2013. 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. Box 1333, Pearland, Texas 77588

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

Name _____

Address _____
