

# PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 20, Edition 3  
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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

The really sad part of writing this **Newsletter** is reflecting on the lives of our **Historical Society** members and long time "**old Pearlanders**" whom we have lost since the last **Newsletter**. It is particularly sad in writing this issue. In the last three months we have lost five older members of our **Historical Society** all of whom contributed greatly for the betterment of the town of **Pearland**. Stories about each of them are in the "**Among our Members**" section of the **Newsletter**.

I hope each of you had a safe and happy **4<sup>th</sup> of July**. Every **Memorial Day** and **4<sup>th</sup> of July**, I think about how fortunate we are to live in the **U.S.A.** – "**land of the free and home of the brave**" and about the **Pearland** men who have served our country and of those who never made it back home. On our timeline on the wall of our **Historical Society** home is a list of those who served during **WWII** and also a list of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Almost any time a group of long time **Pearlanders** get together the topic will usually get around to discussing the difference in growing up in **Pearland** today as compared to those old days when we had pitcher pumps outdoor privies and a nickel soda water or candy bar was a real treat. In almost every story we have printed in previous **Newsletters** written by one of our members reminiscing about growing up in **Pearland** he or she will comment about the

privileges kids have today which we would never of dreamed about in our teen years; but invariably he or she will wind up the story by saying "I wouldn't trade my childhood and growing up in **Pearland** with the kids today."

That is the great part about our annual **Reunion Luncheon** – getting together with long time friends and classmates and reminiscing about those "good old days." Further in the **Newsletters** are a few items about **Pearland** in **1965** since we are honoring the class of **65**. To many of our members the "**class of 65**" will be the "kids" at the luncheon. Be sure to make your plans to attend the luncheon and re-live those old memories.

Don't forget our regular quarterly meeting **Thursday, July 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.** at our home on **Galveston Street**. **State Representative Ed Thompson** will be our guest speaker to bring us up to date on what is going on in the **Texas State Legislature**.

**Mickey Mark**

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## What's Happening

Our **Wednesday** work group continues to meet most weeks and to work on a weekly basis. In the last **Newsletter** we mentioned that the **Lion's Club** was donating two display cases to us for displaying **Pearland** historical memorabilia.

Below is a picture of the two beautiful cabinets which were made by **Lion members Larry Corron (husband of Society Member Karen Corron) and Ron Leistad**. Our sincere appreciation goes out to the **Lion's Club** and to **Larry and Ron** and also to **Pearland Ace Hardware** who donated lumber and **Binswanger Glass Co.** who donated the glass for the cabinets.



**Lion members Ron Leistad (left) and Larry Corron with display cases.**

Most of you probably saw a story in the **Community Section** of the **Houston Chronicle** recently about our **Historical Society**. The story has generated a little interest in our **Society** and hopefully will also bring in some younger members. Recently **Luther Cunningham** and I met with **Rebecca Goins Lilley**, who is **Director of Community and Volunteer Relations** with **Memorial Hermann Hospital**. **Memorial** is in the process of completing a new hospital just west of **Highway 288 in Pearland**. **Rebecca** told us that **Memorial Hermann** would like to have some history of **Pearland** (pictures etc) in a room near the lobby of the hospital. We have invited **Rebecca** and their **Director of Marketing, Corrina Abrego** to visit our **Historical Society** home to look at the time line of **Pearland** history.

The project to create a **Pearland** history video is still a go. The **City of Pearland** has almost completed a video which might be a good one

for each school. **Kinkaid High School** student and boy scout **Rahul Popat** for his eagle scout project is working on a **Pearland** history video. Also the **DVD "The Heart of Pearland"** which **Susan Smith Lenamon** put together back in the 90's could be updated to make a very interesting video for the schools.

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### Among our Members

The difficult part of writing **Newsletters** is reporting sickness and deaths or other problems among our members and old time **Pearlanders**. Once again we do have some sad news to report.



**Marjorie Lawrence & Luther Cunningham at recent Historical Society Luncheon**

On **May 5<sup>th</sup>** **Society Member** and former **Pearland** teacher **Marjorie Lawrence** passed away. Many of our members have some very fond memories of **Marjorie** who had turned **94** last **March 27<sup>th</sup>**. **Marjorie** was one of those persons who would light up the room as soon as she walked in with her upbeat manner and funny comments. She also contributed in a big way to the history of **Pearland** when in 1976 she presented a school musical in celebration of our country's 200th anniversary. In addition at that time she also gathered historical information and put together a great booklet about **Pearland** history with several pioneer family histories.

The booklet is one of our prized possessions in our **Pearland** historical collection. **Marjorie** was a regular at our annual luncheon. She will be missed; but she also will be always remembered for being a very interesting and fun person.

In the last issue of the Newsletter we mentioned that **Society Member David Scott**, who at **95** was **Pearland's** oldest native born citizen, was in the hospital after being diagnosed as having pneumonia. After a lengthy stay in the hospital, **David** was transferred to **Windsong Nursing Home** where he passed away on **May 15<sup>th</sup>**. **David** will always have a place in **Pearland** history as the player who scored the first ever touchdown for the **Pearland Oilers** in **Pearland's** first and only game in the fall of 1937 when the **Oilers** defeated **LaMarque**. That was the **Oilers** first season of football and the only game in **1937**; and in the fall of **1938** **Pearland** did not field a football team. **David** graduated in **1939** so he always said he was the only quarterback that ever played for the **Oilers** who never lost a game. **David** remained very active in the community. He was one of the founding members of the **Pearland Volunteer Fire Department**, was one of the members of the **Lion's Club**, the **Masons** and **VFW** and an active member of the **Methodist Church**. He also was a regular attendee at **Pearland Oiler** football games. Around **Pearland** he was known as "**Mr. Pearland**". **David** was preceded in death by his wife **Anna Scott**, who will also be remembered for her many years as the only nurse for the **Pearland School District**, brother **Lloyd Scott**, sisters **Elsie Haney** and **Irene Bailey**. He is survived by daughters, **Karan Wheelock** and husband **Dan** and **Rachal Dahse** and husband **Ron** (all of whom are **Society** members).

When we light the candles in memory of our deceased members and old time **Pearlanders** at our luncheon this fall, we will have special memories of **David** since he was the one who

made the beautiful candle stand we use to remember those who are no longer with us.



David Scott with memorial candle holder

On **May 21<sup>st</sup>** we lost **Mary Lee Smith Miller**, our oldest **Historical Society** member. **Mary Lee** was **104** years old. **Mary Lee** was another one who was a regular at our reunion luncheon. As we have mentioned before in our **Newsletters**, **Mary Lee** was one of the first interviews done for the **Newsletter** about 20 years ago; and at that time she recalled that when she and her husband, **Jack Miller**, built their home on the corner of **Austin** and **Orange** **Mary Lee** thought they were way out in the country. **Mary Lee** was always active in **Pearland** school and community activities. **Mary Lee** was predeceased by husband **Jack Miller**, brother **Clarence Smith**, and sister **Joyce Smith Miller**. The **Smith** family came to **Pearland** in **1928**. She is survived by her daughter **Ina (Ikie) Miller** and brother **David Smith**, both of whom are **Historical Society** members. **Mary Lee** had been a resident at **Holly Hall** for about the 20 past years.



Mary Lee Smith Miller with daughter "Ikie"

Further in the **Newsletter** in the "Looking Back" section is story about **Pearland** 50 years ago which includes a short story about **Jack Miller**.

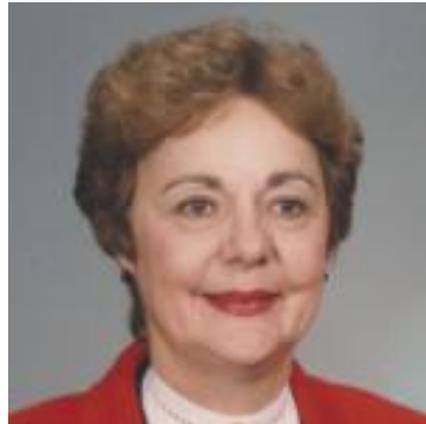
It seems we lost more outstanding old time **Pearlanders** in the last three months than any time since we have been doing the **Newsletter**. On **June 10<sup>th</sup>** **Evelyn Martin Lawhon** passed away after an extended stay in the nursing home. **Evelyn**, a **1943 PHS graduate**, was a member of the **Pearland** pioneer **Martin** family being the granddaughter of **Samuel Pleasant Martin** who came to **Pearland** in **1894**. **Evelyn** was the last living child of **Roy Forrest Martin Sr.** She is pictured here with her brother **Roy F. "Dude" Martin** at a **Pearland Reunion**.



Roy F. (Dude) and Evelyn Martin Lawhon

**Evelyn** was the drum major of the **Pearland High School** all girls drum and bugle corps in 1941 and 1942. Her high school sweetheart was **Edgar Allan "Buster" Lawhon**, a **1942 PHS** grad who went into the **Marine Corps** after graduating and who was severely wounded at the battle of **Guam**. After being in a military hospital for almost 3 years, he returned to **Pearland** and he and **Evelyn** married. **Buster** later was a coach and principal at **PISD. Lawhon Intermediate School** is named in his honor. **Evelyn** worked for many years at the **Pearland** post office and also for the **school district**. She was a wonderful lady and will be very much missed.

Long time **Pearlander Bettye Alexander** passed away at the age of 87 on **June 11<sup>th</sup>**. **Bettye** suffered a severe stroke some time back (about 3 years ago) and had been incapacitated since.



Bettye Alexander

**Bettye** was preceded in death by her husband, **Tom Alexander, Sr.** who she married in **1945**. **Bettye** grew up in **Alvin** but had lived in **Pearland** since **1949**. She was very involved with community activities with many different organizations. Although she did participate in many various community projects, many of the **Pearland** old timers will remember **Bettye** as the person most responsible for **Pearland's** first community library. The first public library in **Pearland** was in a stucco building on **Grand**

**Blvd.** which had been originally built as a pool hall. Under **Bettye's** leadership a group of **Pearland** ladies worked to give our little community its first library. Perhaps someone can tell us what year that was.

**Bettye** is survived by children **Tom, Jr., Diana Alexander Holzhauser, Cynthia (Cindy) Alexander and Harriett Alexander Holmes** and numerous grandchildren.

She will be remembered as a very gracious lady who contributed her time and energy in making **Pearland** a better place to live.

**Society Member Joe Dalmolin** passed away **June 21<sup>st</sup>**. **Joe** suffered a heart attack back in early **February** and had been in **Windsong Nursing Home** since getting out of the hospital in late **February**. **Joe** was **91** years old. Those of us old enough to remember will recall **Joe** was a member of the **Pearland** town team softball team back in the late 40's. Although **Joe** was raised in **Manvel**, he was a long time **Pearland** resident. He was preceded in death by his wife **Catherine Ferri Dalmolin**, who was a **1945 PHS** grad. Our sympathies go out to all of **Joe's** family.



**Joe Dalmolin**

**Jewel Harris**, wife of former **Pearland** school principal **C. J. Harris**, passed away about **July 1<sup>st</sup>**.

**Jewel** is survived by sons **David (PHS class of 1975), Steve (class of 1969)** and daughter **Patti (class of 1972)**

Please keep former **Pearland** home-economics teacher and girls basketball coach, **Mrs. Florene Little**, in your prayers. She is in hospice service in **Lovelady, Texas**. Many of our members have some great memories of their classes with or of playing basketball for **Mrs. Little**.

**Society Member Ida Long Munday** is now in hospice service. In the **October 2014** issue of the **Newsletter** we had a story about **Charles Treat Davidson**, the man who established the first telephone system in **Pearland** and wrote that although there are many of his descendents in the **Pearland** area there are no descendents by the name of **Davidson**. There are however numerous descendents from the five **Davidson** daughters of **Charles Treat Davidson**. **Ida** is the daughter of **Dora Davidson Long**. Keep **Ida** and family in your prayers.

In the **April** issue of the **Newsletter**, we reported on some **Society** members who were going through some rough times health wise. Here are some updates.

**Society Member David Smith** fell and suffered a shattered ankle back in early **March**. After spending time in the hospital and rehab facilities, **David** is now in **Trinity Oaks Assisted Living at 3030 Pearland Parkway in Pearland**.

**Society Member Jennie Lee Talbot** will be having surgery to replace a heart valve on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Please keep **Jennie** in your prayers.

It is good to report that **Society Member Sidney Kliesing** is back at home and doing very well since being hospitalized with a broken collar bone and fractured hip from a motorcycle accident. Keep up the good work, **Sid**.

Also it is good to report that **Society** member and former long time **Pearland** coach, **Anton (Tony) Smjastrla** is doing better. In the last issue we reported **Tony** had just got out of the hospital after suffering from pneumonia and

other problems. Continue to keep **Tony, Pat** and family in your prayers.

Also former **Pearland** coach, teacher and transportation director, **Willard “Jug” Backhaus** spent some time in the hospital and is now in **Windsong Nursing Home**. **Jug**, who is 90 years old, has not had a definitive diagnosis; but he was very dehydrated when he went in the hospital. Hopefully he will soon be able to return home. Jug started coaching at **Pearland** in **1949** and spent his entire career with the **Pearland School District**. Keep **Jug** in your prayers also.

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The invitations for our Historical Society annual Reunion Luncheon have been mailed out to the members of the honored class of 1965. There are still quite a few members for whom we do not have a mailing address. If you know the address for anyone on this list please e-mail it to [mark325@prodigy.net](mailto:mark325@prodigy.net).

*Vivian Armstrong; Billy Basket; Beth Benedict; Cheryl Black; Travis Black; Cynthia Bryan; Frank Cannon; Talmage Colson; Fay Frolick, Vera Guice; Presley Hood; Martin Matochal; Arleen Miller; Mike Morgan; Quida Parker; Estella Ramirez; Billy Sanders; Lynda Shannon; and James Smith.*

Deceased members of the class of 65 are as follows:

*Larry Fisher; Dean Haskins; Sharon McBride Honeycutt; Bill Kliesing; Donald McDaniel; William Payne; Hughie Raney; Kenneth Schmidth; Gerald Thompson; Harry Thompson; and Marilyn Bowers*

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### LOOKING BACK

At our **Pearland Historical Society** headquarters we have a lot of interesting memorabilia, pictures, stories, etc. Among them

is a large box of **Pearland Progress** newspapers from the 60’s and 70’s. In thinking about the luncheon coming up and the class of 65, it was interesting to pull out a few issues of the **Pearland Progress** and see what was going on in **Pearland** back in **1965** both with the class of 65 and in the community. Here are few things you might find interesting.

In a **Jan. 1965** issue of the **Pearland Progress** there is a story about the **City of Pearland** getting a new “modern” \$6000 bookkeeping machine that could prepare bills for all 680 **Pearland** utility customers in about one week. The article mentions that the **Pearland** administration department consisted of **Mr. W. A. McClellan, City Manager** and full time workers **Mrs. Dorothy Thompson and Mrs. Ann Piersoll** (current **Historical Society** member) and one part time employee, **Mrs. Dorothy Cook**. Makes you wonder how many employees the **City** now has for the administration department. Also I wonder if Ann remembers the machine. The title of the story was “**Bookkeeping Goes Modern in Pearland.**”

Another story in that same issue was about a new sub-division opening in **Pearland**. It was **Sherwood**. The article says the homes in **Sherwood** were 3 to 4 bedroom homes, air conditioned and each had two baths. The price for the homes ranged from \$18,000 to \$22,000.

Another interesting story in one of the **January** issues was about the **Houston Astrodome** going to open on **April 9<sup>th</sup>** and opening up a new era in sports and entertainment in a stadium “*which guarantees weather control, cleanliness and comfort for events which have never been able to promise these luxuries.*” The cost for building the **Astrodome** was **\$31.6 million**. The article went on to say fans could send checks or money orders for tickets. Prices were \$3.50 for box seats and \$2.50 for reserve seats. At that time who would have ever imagined the

**Astrodome** sitting vacant 50 years later with debates going on about what to do with it.

There were several stories about members of the graduating class of **1965**. One story was about **Lynette Raney (Historical Society member Lynette Raney Wilson)** being named the “**Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow**”. **Lynette** scored the highest in a written homemaking examination taken by senior girls and was therefore eligible to participate in the **Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow** state contest with an opportunity to participate in the national contest and win a scholarship with a value up to \$5000. The article does mention that **Lynette** was a homemaking student under the guidance of **Mrs. J. E. Little**



Lynette Raney Wilson

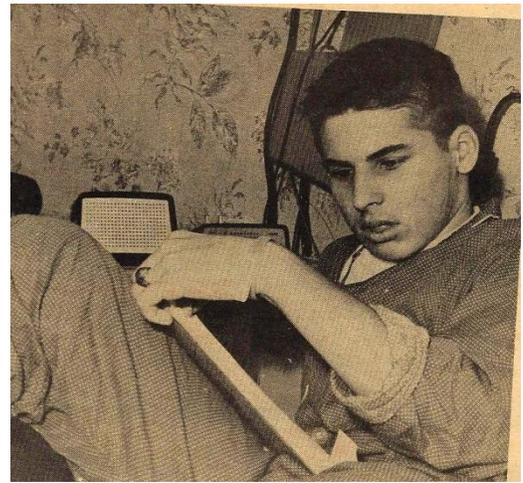


Mrs. J. E. Little

In another front page story in the **Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> 1965** issue of the “**Progress**” is a picture of senior **Tommy Hunter** with the headline “**Tommy Dials “E” for English in Hospital**”. In a freak accident **Tommy** was knocked through a plate glass window of a **Seven-Eleven** store in **Houston** on **Valentine’s Day** when the car he and several other boys was in lurched forward. His cousin tried to hit the brake and accidentally got on the accelerator knocking Tommy through the window cutting him around his face and head. The story is about **Tommy** being in the hospital, but not missing out on **Mrs. Oliver’s English class** every morning when he would dial

her class where she had a telephone on her desk with a speaker and microphone beside it.

**Tommy** said he could hear everything **Mrs Oliver** said and could even hear her walking. The article went on to say **Tommy** was recovering from plastic surgery and was to have one more operation before he could go home. The picture below was on the front page of the “**Progress**.”



**Tommy Hunter in Methodist Hospital**

The picture below was also in the same issue of the “**Progress**” with a story about **Coach Tony** getting his guys prepared for the track season.



**L.R: Paul Wellman, Kenny Price, Roy Johnson, Mike Ivy, Johnnie Rains, Coach Tony Smajstrla. Illustrating the starting position is Gary Prebilsky**

As mentioned earlier in the **Newsletter** in searching through old **1965 Pearland Progresses** we found a very interesting story about **Jack Miller**. **Mary Lee** talked often about thing their home on **Austin and Orange** was out in the country. The story in the **Progress** was about **Jack Miller** being a local “**saddle fixer**” something he had been doing since he was a kid working in his dad’s dairy farm west of **Pearland**.

Most of us old time **Pearlanders** remember **Jack** as the operator of the old **Crown** station on the southwest corner of **Main and Broadway**. (Editor’s Note: In the story the writer referred to the **Crown** station as being on the corner by **Pearland’s** traffic light Most of us also remember that light as being “**Pearland’s** only traffic light”) According to the story, **Jack** was also well known for his skill in repairing saddles by hand. People from all over the area would bring their saddles to **Jack** who had et up his saddle repair shop in his garage where he did the work by hand.

From a historical point of view the really interesting part of the story was what **Jack** said about growing up on a dairy farm west of **Pearland** and riding horses from the time he was six years old. He told of riding for an outfit that herded 22,000 head of cattle up from the bay area to load for shipment on the railroad in **Alvin**. He recalled driving cattle up what is now **Highway 35** to to **Holcomb Blvd. in Houston**. (Probably to the laughter house in that area of **Houston**.)

At the time of the interview, **Jack** spoke of learning his love of horses and how to repair saddles while growing up on the dairy farm where it was a necessity to do things yourself. The story goes on to talk about the barn in back of **Jack and Mary Lee’s** house where he had two horses and goes into considerable detail about the training the horses received.

The story was quite interesting. Some of our members might remember **Jack** being a saddle repair man. It certainly does confirm what **Mary Lee** said. They were out in the country.

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### **A Few Random Thoughts**

*If pro is opposite of con, then what is the opposite of progress?*

*Parents spend the first part of their lives teaching their kids to walk and talk, and the rest of it telling us to sit down and shut up.*

*Books have knowledge, knowledge is power, power corrupts, corruption is a crime, and crime doesn't pay..so if you keep reading, you'll go broke*

*Advice for the day: If you have a headache, do what it says on the aspirin bottle: Take two, and KEEP AWAY FROM CHILDREN.*

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**DON'T FORGET OUR NEXT**

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING**

**IS THURSDAY, JULY 16<sup>TH</sup> AT**

**7:00 P.M. AT OUR HISTORICAL**

**SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS**

**SPECIAL GUEST WILL BE STATE**

**REPRESENTATIVE ED THOMPSON**

**COFFEE, COLD DRINKS, HOME**

**MADE COOKIES AND**

**VISITATION WILL FOLLOW THE**

**MEETING. SEE YOU THERE**

**RETURN THIS FORM TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE AT THE PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY "REUNION LUNCHEON" SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015 AT THE PEARLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (OLD WALMART BUILDING) ON HWY 35. TICKETS ARE \$10.00 PER PERSON. PLEASE NOTE: TICKETS PURCHASED AT THE DOOR WILL BE \$15 PER PERSON.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, count me in for a good time at the annual Historical Society Reunion Luncheon.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for luncheon tickets.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SPOUSE OR GUEST'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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

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**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 2015. 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: \_\_\_\_\_



