



# The Epitonium

## April Meeting

The meeting on **Tuesday, April 20** will be a presentation of Jackie Reid's spectacular underwater photography. If you are not familiar with Jackie's gorgeous pictures of sea life, you are in for a treat. If you have seen his work, you know it is an exotic, mini-vacation without the expense and hassle of travel. Come and enjoy!

## President's Message

by Darwin Alder

My thanks, love and gratitude go out to everyone for the expressions of sympathy on the passing of my friend Roy W. Horton.

Join us **Tuesday, April 20th** at 7:00 p.m. for social hour and 7:30 p.m. for the meeting. We have a super program in store. We will have a true, mini-silent auction at the meeting. I will try to have the majority of the shells on the sale table less than one inch in length. These will be great for crafts or a fantastic collection of small shells.

If you haven't gotten your banquet ticket, I have a great event planned! Tickets will be on sale up to the 10th of May. Join us for an afternoon of enjoyment at the Monument Inn, **May 15, 2010** beginning at **1:00 p. m.** I am planning a very special treat for all who come. Tickets are available from Dennis and Mary Harris at \$15.00/ person.

Have a good time shelling or whatever makes you happy!

## 2010 Auction

Wow! The 2010 auction was one of our most successful. Auction profits totaled \$4,697.00! Thanks to the auction committee (Darwin Alder, Cathy Betley, Lucy Clampit, Dennis and Mary Harris, Tina and Frank Petway) for another great event. Thanks also go to: auctioneer Darwin A. and his assistants Mary H., Tina P. and Patty Humbird; silent auction helpers Cathy B., Sandy Clark and Gary Olson; cashiers Dennis H. and Jerry Clampit; Pat Hough for helping put the room back in order; Dean Harris and others who helped in the kitchen and everyone who brought food or helped in other ways.

None of it would have been possible without bidders. Shellers came from as far away as Corpus Christi, San Antonio and the Lake Jackson area to place bids. One HCS member bid from England and one bid from Tennessee. Thank you for spending your hard earned money.

Thanks also go to the generous donors: Dave & Nancy Barziza, Cathy Betley, Nancy Browning, Lucy Clampit, Sandy Clark, Victoria Craig, Jimmy Ernest, Femorale (Jose & Marcus Coltro shell dealers in Brazil), Mary Harris, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Barbara Hudson, Laretta Marr, Deon Mauk, Allison McHenry, Nancy Mustachio, Gary Olson, Tina & Frank Petway, L.B. & Elizabeth Ruthven, and Luis Vela.

Start saving your money for next year!

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**Treasurer:**

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Rusti Stover  
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Lucy Clampit  
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**Program Committee**

**Vice President**  
Leslie Crnkovic

Visit HCS online at  
[www.houstonshellclub.com](http://www.houstonshellclub.com)

**CALENDAR**

4-20	<b>HCS Meeting</b>
5-1	San Antonio auction
5-15	<b>HCS Banquet</b>
8-27	COA Begins

**HCS Dues**

Membership renewals are due in May. Forms are available from the web site:

<http://houstonshellclub.i-power.com/About.htm>

**In Memoriam**

Darwin's longtime friend: Roy Horton

Texas shellers:  
June Huie and  
Nunnie Clements

**March Minutes**

Submitted by Rusti Stover

President Darwin Alder called the March 3, 2010 meeting of the Houston Conchology Society to order at 1:15 p.m. during the lunch break at the annual shell auction at Immanuel Lutheran Church. Sandy Clark made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 16, 2010 meeting as read. Lucy Clampit seconded, all approved. Motion passed. No treasurer's report was given at this time.

Darwin announced that the nominating committee had succeeded in assembling a slate of officers for the 2010/2011 season. Nominated were: President - Sandy Clark; Vice President - Rachel Zelko; Treasurer - Dennis Harris; Recording Secretary - Angela Doucette; Corresponding Secretary - Lucy Clampit; and Programs - Darwin Alder. Lucy Clampit also agreed to be Membership Chairperson for another year. A motion was made by Dave Barziza to accept the slate of nominees and elect them by acclamation. Leslie Crnkovic seconded, all approved. The new officers for 2010/2011 were elected.

Rusti Stover summarized a letter received from Joel Bartsch, President of the Houston Museum of Natural Science, thanking HCS for the gifts of a *Cypraea tigris* shell from the collection of the late Helen Cornellison, and a *Pecten cranmerorum* that was purchased by the society and donated to the museum.

No other business was presented, and Darwin asked for a motion to close the meeting. Tina Petway moved, Wayne Humbird seconded, and Darwin closed the meeting at 1:25 p.m.

**Barbara Heinrich**

In March, HCS member Barbara Heinrich (far right) was honored with a Congressional Gold Medal for her service in the Women Air Force Service Pilots program during World War II. The picture is from the March 11, 2010 issue of the *Houston Chronicle*.

## PEARLS IN THE NEVADA DESERT? - Part 2

A pearl article in 2 parts by Joaquin Inchaustegui (Continued from February)

There are several types of cultured pearls such as:

**FRESHWATER PEARLS** which are cultured in fresh water lakes, ponds and rivers. They are nucleated by inserting a small piece of mantle tissue from a donor naiad into a young mollusc's valve. This process can be repeated up to 25 times per valve after the pearl has been harvested. Then the pearls are dyed (if needed), drilled and strung for sale. These freshwater pearls are generally low quality, irregularly shaped and with a lesser luster than the saltwater variety. They fetch a lower price and so are in demand for costume jewelry.

**SALTWATER PEARLS** are grown in marine molluscs, and are usually rounder and of a higher quality than the freshwater pearls. This is because marine molluscs are nucleated with a seed nucleus as well as the donor mantle tissue which forms the bead sac, and since the seed is round the resulting pearl is round. There are several types of saltwater pearls available which causes some confusion with the various names for these pearls.

**AKOYA PEARLS** are grown in the Akoya oyster, which is the smallest of the saltwater pearl oysters. As a result, Akoya pearls are some of the smallest saltwater pearls available, and are rarely seen at more than 8 mm. Akoya pearls are bead-nucleated cultured pearls produced in *Pinctada fucata martensii* Dunker, 1872 and *P. fucata* Gould, 1850. Akoya pearls were traditionally farmed in China and Japan, although these days most Japanese Akoya pearls are actually from China. These have a rich deep luster and are generally round or near round, and either white or cream with overtones of rose pink. They are extremely desirable for matching with existing jewelry due to their consistency of shape, color and quality, and can command fairly high prices.



**TAHITIAN PEARLS** are formed in the black lipped oyster (*Pinctada margaritifera* Linne, 1758) in and around the French Polynesian Islands. The black lipped oyster is one of the largest pearl producing molluscs, and so the size of the resulting Tahitian pearls is larger than Akoya pearls. Tahitian pearls are much darker than other saltwater pearls and naturally occur in a range of colors, often called "black", although a true black pearl is quite rare. Most have hues of other colors, usually green. My wife, Rose has a beautiful "black" pearl ring she bought in French Polynesia on the Island of Huahine in 1990.

**SOUTH SEA PEARLS** are cultured in the waters be-

tween Australia and China, using *Pinctada maxima* Jameson, 1901. South Sea Pearls can be between 9 and 20mm, some of the largest cultured pearls in the world. South Sea Pearls have a much thicker layer of nacre than others, up to 6mm thick and have a satiny luster. They come in a variety of pale hues and are very desirable.

CORTEZ PEARLS are farmed in the sea around California and they are also referred to as New World Black Pearls. Cortez pearls are produced in the Panamic Black-Lipped Oyster *Pinctada mazatlanica* (Hanley, 1856) and the Rainbow-lipped Oyster *Pteria sterna* (Gould, 1851), which produce highly iridescent pearls. Most are baroque, with round pearls forming less than 3% of normal yield.

MABE PEARLS are the semi-round pearls often used in jewelry. They are used in making earrings and rings. They are formed by using hemi-spherical nucleus during nucleation and implanting it against the shell. When harvested they are referred to as blister pearls and are worked into Mabe Pearls by cutting away the shell and filling the back with resin. This is then mounted on a mother-of-pearl back. In my shell collection I had a *Pinctada margaritifera* Linne, 1758 from Tahiti with a large attached blister pearl on one of the valves. The pearl was almost entirely black and if properly worked it could have become a beautiful Mabe Pearl.

GASTROPOD PEARLS are rare natural pearls produced by gastropods. *Strombus gigas* Linne, 1758 produces a large, pink pearl which although hardly ever round, is very rare and desirable to collectors. One of the members of the Louisiana Malacological Society had a large pink pearl of this gastropod and although not round (it was more elongated than wide) she had it mounted into a beautiful ring.

I found a rare natural pearl in a *Conus striatus* Linne, 1758 from Kenya. It was tear-shaped and the same color as the Cone. I obtained this shell in a trade with a Kenyan collector and I received it with the animal mummified inside it because Kenya is very dry but Louisiana is very damp and this would have eventually caused the well known aroma of dead mollusc. While cleaning it, before adding it to my collection, out fell this little pearl. I reported this in Hawaiian Shell News with pictures but unfortunately Hurricane Katrina took the shell, the pearl, the HSN article, the picture and negatives.

So if you doubt that there are pearls in the Nevada desert, there really are, and I have some in my collection to prove it.

Photos by the Author.

#### References:

- Burch, Beatrice L., Hawaiian Shell News, August 1995
- Burch, Beatrice L., Hawaiian Shell News, September 1995
- Burch, Beatrice L., Hawaiian Shell News, October 1995
- Burch, Beatrice L., Hawaiian Shell News, November 1995
- Glancy, Fred F., Of Sea and Shore, Fall, 1980
- Inchaustegui, J.M., Hawaiian Shell News, March 1971
- Inchaustegui, J.M., American Conchologist, June 1985

## HCS Members Journey to Sanibel

story and pictures by Rusti Stover

Rusti Stover and her boyfriend Terry drove to Sanibel, Florida for the 73rd Annual Shell Show the beginning of March. Rusti entered 10 categories, in both the Scientific and Hobby divisions,



and won 3 blue ribbons, 4 - 2nd place ribbons and 2 - 3rd place ribbons, plus a Judge's Special Award ribbon and 2 plaques: the Judge's ribbon and one plaque, Best in Show Hobbyist, were given for Rusti's doll-house-scale miniature shell museum, The Small Hall of Malacology, which was the hit of the show. Rusti won the Howard Sexauer Memorial Silver Bowl trophy (now a plaque), for her display of "The Evolution of the Texas State Shell", which included 3 large, self-collected lightning whelks from South Padre Island.

Leslie Crnkovic flew to Florida for the show, and displayed a collection of shell books and pepper books by the late Texas author, Jean Andrews, as a tribute. He also entered a shell flower bouquet in the hobbyist division. Leslie, Rusti and Terry enjoyed spending time with friend and noted shell book author S. Peter Dance, who flew in from England for the show. They had lunch with Peter at the Mucky Duck on Captiva Island on Friday, and went low-tide late night shelling with Peter and Harlan Wittkopf Thursday night, in a 37-degree cold wind! But the shelling was great and worth the effort!



An interesting note about the show: R. Tucker Abbott's widow, Cecelia Abbott, attended the show on Saturday with her grandsons, and met with Peter Dance for the first time in 20 years. Their meeting was very cordial, ending any speculation about a long-standing feud that was finally attributed to a dishonest publisher associated with the Compendium of Seashells.

On the drive home, Rusti and Terry visited another noted author and friend, Jack Rudloe, at his Gulf Specimen Lab and Aquarium in Panacea, Florida.

## TEXAS COAST DAY-TRIPS: Feb. 28 & Mar. 27, 2010

by Cathy Betley

What a beautiful day - bright and sunny with fog on the way. We started at the Dawn Donut Shop for beach nourishment and went directly to Galveston's East Beach (old Apffel Park) and the south Galveston Channel jetty. You have to enter the park from the west side road that also serves the high rise condos and the new Beach Town homes. In about two seconds it was

obvious that the crop of epitoniums that had washed in about two years ago were still being deposited on the beach at the various tide lines. With high reverence to Tina's ecological point-of-view (don't take too many when they wash in since they may wash back out again for more reproduction), Darwin determined that these shells (completely cleaned of operculums and black shell bodies along with some broken specimens and parts) were probably being redeposited from past years. We found them at all the various five or so high tide lines. At this time of year, the tides at East Beach tend to leave ripples in the sand about 4-inches apart and we found epitoniums between those ripples as well as on top of and embedded in the associated material at the two highest tide lines. Darwin was in "epitonium nirvana".

It's obvious that it's shell springtime on the Texas Gulf Coast, since we also found many very small and tiny specimens of typical Texas shell fare - tellins, pen shells, very small dosinia pairs, etc. Victoria enjoyed picking up her favorite sharks eyes that were just about 1/2 inch in size. There is now an accessible, large sand flat on the north side of the south jetty but the shell material is older and seems to be redeposited.

We dragged Darwin away from East Beach with a big stash of epitoniums and followed the seawall & the Blue Water Highway to Surfside. Much to our astonishment, Murdoch's is back. I guess you can't keep a great gift shop down. It's been in Galveston since 1910 minus a year for Ike, but there it is in all its pastel blue and white glory beckoning shoppers to check out beach gifts and t-shirts.

The old Galveston Park Pocket Park #1 site is still a pleasant place to stop (behind the biker bar across from Michael Burger). For several years, the high tide has fed the lake between the coast line and the highway so it's always an interesting stop.

Getting to San Luis Pass has become a bit of a problem. Your first choice might be to take a left turn at the water tower to enter the beach and then take a right towards the pass, but you are greeted with a large sign at the new condominium property line that says "do not enter by order of Ordinance 94-26". There is no chain across the two posts at this time of year, but the sign is a little intimidating. At that site we found lots of fresh dead tellins. We decided to try the other entrance to the pass but get ready for a bit of a bumpy ride. The Galveston County road to San Luis Pass under the toll booth is poorly maintained and has many craters and depressions. Once you arrive at the sand line your best route is to turn to the left, drive toward the condos and find an easy location to turn towards the beach and the hard sand. A layer of blown sand has developed between the water and the dunes that can be a little tricky to negotiate without 4-wheel drive. An alternate that we did not try is to take the hard packed one-lane roads through the dunes to the north of the bridge and try to negotiate a path under the bridge to the water. Then you may be able to drive to the left and follow along the water's edge. In past years, the tide line usually has had some Texas shells of interest but gradually the sand bars and tide lines at the pass have changed and the shelling has also changed. We all know about the expression, "you should have been here yesterday". We beach and shell lovers just have to keep trying.

Later in the afternoon, the winds picked up a little and just the sound of the small waves landing on the beach gave us a very relaxed and content feeling for a great sunny, Sunday. We continued to Surfside beach but most of the shells there were older with only a little newly deposited material. We did notice that the width of sand from the water to the dunes seems to be shorter than in previous years. It seems that all along the coast from Galveston to Surfside,

our Texas beaches have changed characteristics but beach trips are always fun and interesting.

**On Saturday, March 27**, Darwin, Victoria and I discovered that the epitoniums are still on the beach in the high tide line at Galveston's East Beach jetty but be prepared to pay for parking. The City of Galveston's R.A. Apffel Park, without their bath house that was destroyed by Ike, opened on March 6th and the parking fee is \$8.00. The parking attendant said that there are plans to re-build the facilities but there is no definite start date yet. We stayed at the jetty for about two hours and then relaxed for a while in the white Adirondack chairs on the deck between the two retail areas at Murdock's. The shopping landmark was rebuilt and opened in the fall of 2009.

Since I-45 South was closed at Bay Area Boulevard (it pays to check the big TxDot info signs along the highways), we detoured on Highway 3 on our return trip and checked out the old Texas City Dike. The dike road is still closed from Ike damage but the levee road is open and one area of the road seems to be a popular spot for wind surfers and canopy surfers, too. The wind was really providing excellent rides.

For more pictures of the auction and the January field trip, go to: <http://www.houstonshellclub.com/Photo%20Album.htm>.



Is that a good buy?



silent auction bidding

## Treasures from the Sea Auction

San Antonio Shell Club members invite HCS members to attend a shell auction on **Saturday, May 1, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.** It will be at the Los Angeles Heights Presbyterian Church Education Hall, 2002 W. Olmos Drive, San Antonio, TX 78201. There will be many sea-shells and shell related items for sale in both oral and silent auctions and a bargain table.

There will also be raffle items and door prizes. Lunch will be provided. For more information contact: (210) 342-2180. Visit the web site to see some of the Auction items:

[www.sashellclub.org](http://www.sashellclub.org).

**Directions:** From IH10 West to or from "El Paso" take Fresno Drive Exit. Enter Fresno Drive from frontage road. Traveling south turn right. From northbound, turn left, pass under IH10. Pass Santa Paula Ave, Neer Ave, Buckeye Ave, West Ave. Turn Left after Ben Franklin School onto Excelsior Drive. The Auction location is one block ahead. Look for signs. There is parking along the street and a parking lot east of the Church.