



## WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT WEDNESDAYS?

Most mornings, when you step off of the Museum's second floor elevator, it's relatively quiet but that's not the case on Wednesdays. You can feel energy in the air the moment you exit on the second floor. You can't miss the welcome "hustle and bustle."

Three or four people are gathered around a table. Metal specimen drawers dot the work surface. At one end of the table someone is bent over a microscope and on the other end a large magnifying glass is held above a specimen not visible to the naked eye. They are so focused that a staff member's entrance to the room goes unnoticed.

All of them have different reasons for being here and diverse stories about their decision to volunteer in this way. Hal Pilcher has been a Great Hall docent since the Museum's opening in November of 1995. He talked his wife, Marguerite, into joining him. At first they spent one morning a week serving in this role but before long they were providing visitors with exhibit explanations and answering questions two mornings a week.

Eventually, Hal and Marguerite joined the Wednesday morning group. This group meets on the second floor in the collections area. They must be important because their work takes place behind the very intimidating "staff only" sign.

Hal reports, "Most of the specimens are submitted clean and classified." "The shells are segregated by family," he

adds. "For instance, cones are integrated into one group." Next the shells are placed in alphabetic order. When the group started working on cones, they were joined and encouraged by Alan Kohn, a scientist and author of several books dedicated to cones.

"Most people think we take in entire collections and keep them whole," said Hal. A collection might consist of shoeboxes stuffed to the brim with shells. Identifying the specimen is just the beginning. "In order to accept a shell into the collection very specific information is required," he added. Where the shell was found is important even down to the latitude and longitude of the specimen collection site, if available. Was it found in a tidal pool or taken from the ocean floor in 10,000 feet of water?

Bob Lynd has been shelling for years. Initially, he just collected shells, the scientific name wasn't important. It was a murex that caught his eye and changed his fascination with shells from casual to scientific. "Some people get hooked on a particular family of shells and devote all of their attention to that family," said Bob. Once a collection is offered to the Museum, and a decision is made to add it to the Museum collection, it is given an accession number. Then according to Bob, "A home is found for the shell in the specimen collection drawers." The collection drawers are housed in specially designed metal museum cabinets.

All the information Bob, Hal, Ted McLean, Jon Greenlaw, Linda Kramer, Smoky Payson, and the other members of the collection team gather is captured on a form. This includes the name of the person who found the shell, when and where it was found and any other relevant information. But the process doesn't stop there.

Marguerite Pilcher closes the loop. She enters all of the information listed on the form into a computer data base Jon developed. Her "shell story" began when she joined the SW Florida Conchological Society simply so she could go on trips. "After I retired I just couldn't sit at home and do nothing," says Marguerite. Since this data entry process was initiated, 25,544 lot records have been captured. This isn't enough to fill her days so she also volunteers at a school library one day a week.

Dick Willis loves shells and computer programming. His job on Wednesdays is the "perfect marriage" of these two interests. He's not what you'd consider a casual shell

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# THE WINNING NUMBER IS ...

José H. Leal, Director of The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, held the winning raffle ticket at the November Chamber of Commerce Box Lunch event. The business with “the right number,” is featured as the “Business of the Month” and permitted to provide a display for the much coveted bookcase space. Kathleen Hoover, the Museum’s new Public Relations Manager, seized the opportunity and designed a colorful, interactive display. Visitors able to correctly identify a shell from an “overflowing basket of miniature shells,” could call the shell their own. If they had already collected shells, they were given a handout on how to identify and clean shells.

## Education Specialist Hired

Dr. José H. Leal announced that The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum has hired Joanne LaFleur, Ph.D., to serve as the Museum’s Education Specialist. This role is dedicated to the development and implementation of educational programs for children and adults as well as coordination of the Museum’s Volunteer Program.

Dr. LaFleur received an undergraduate and master’s degree from Eastern Michigan University, majoring in Special Education and curriculum development for children with special needs. Her Ph.D. in Philosophy was obtained from Walden University, with a dissertation on the effects of auditory learning preferences on the gifted.

“Dr. LaFleur’s passion involves creating and implementing educational programs for all age groups,” said Dr. Leal. “Marine biology has been one of her favorite fields of study for many years.”

Dr. LaFleur served as the owner/manager of Creative Corners, designing curriculum materials and teaching workshops for parents, teachers, and children. Also, she was the Elementary Gifted Coordinator for the Clarenceville Public School District, and Program Director for both the Community Center of Farmington Hills and the Chelsea School District. Dr. LaFleur served as an adjunct professor at the University of Detroit Mercy, Central Michigan University, and Florida Gulf Coast University. For several summers LaFleur conducted summer reading and science camps for children.

Dr. LaFleur has been involved in numerous community service activities. She helped organize two state conferences on youth violence, and presented a program on gifted and talented students for the Michigan Association for Academically Talented and Gifted Children. Dr. LaFleur also served on the Michigan Task Force on



Interpersonal Violence Prevention and the State Superintendents Study Group on violence and vandalism.

“Joanne is a welcome addition to our team,” states Leal. “We are very excited about the new program development already underway.”

## 71st Annual Sanibel Shell Show

The Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club will be hosting the 71st Annual Sanibel Shell Show, Thursday through Saturday, March 6, 7, and 8th, 2008. The show is held at the Sanibel Community Center on Periwinkle Way, Sanibel Island, Florida.

The hours are from 9 am to 5 pm on both Thursday and Friday, and 9 am until 4 pm on Saturday.

In addition to the juried shell show, there is an authors’ table. Many shell writers will be present to sign books. The club’s shell sales table will feature both local and worldwide shells. Vendors will display shell crafts and shell art, featuring the largest selection of Sailor’s Valentines.

On Friday evening, March 7th, Dr. Gary Schmelz will present, “The Colors Of Alaska.” The program will be held at The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, beginning at 7:30 pm. Admission is complimentary.

Dr. Schmelz was awarded an undergraduate degree by Fairleigh Dickinson University and a master’s and a doctorate degree in Marine Biology by the University of Delaware. He has developed a myriad of educational programs for children and educators, receiving the Elsie M.B. Naumburg Award (1985) as the leading environmental educator in the United States. Most recently he was a Professor of Marine Biology, Oceanography and Environmental Science at Edison College, in Naples.

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collector since his personal collection includes 1,000 species but during his weekly visits to the Museum his focus is data collection. "He's been instrumental in fine tuning our collection data base," said Dr. José H. Leal. Since the data base was established, 25,000 lots have been entered. When asked why he volunteers Dick quickly responded, "because it's interesting and the data we're collecting contributes to understanding how mollusks are impacted by, among other things, agricultural runoff and decreased salinity from the introduction of too much fresh water into the estuaries."

It's devoted individuals like these with true "servant hearts" that sustain the mission and vision of The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum.

## Calling All Trustees

On Saturday, January 12th, the Museum's Board of Trustees held their first 2008 board meeting. At this meeting, three new board members were appointed:

Clair Beckmann enjoyed a 30-year career with JPMorganChase and currently serves as the Planned Giving Officer for the Boulder Community Hospital Foundation.

Dr. Douglas S. Jones is the Director and Curator in Invertebrate Paleontology at the Florida Museum of Natural History. He serves as a Professor of Geology and Zoology at the University of Florida and is interested in molluscan ecology and paleoecology.

Dan Schuyler has been a prominent figure in the American jewelry industry for more than 26 years. A native of Maryland, Schuyler has dealt in nearly every aspect of the jewelry business—from sales and advertising to buying and designing. In 2006, Schuyler and Bell opened Lily & Co. Jewelers on Sanibel Island.

Anne Joffe, President of the Board of Trustees, extends her appreciation to those board members who valiantly served the organization for two three year terms. They are:

Dr. M. G. Harasewych, Research Zoologist, Curator of Marine Malacology at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC.

Dr. Paula M. Mikkelsen, Director of Publications, Paleontological Research Institution in Ithaca, New York

## MEET ME "UNDER THE SEA"



The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum will hold their annual fundraiser, "Under the Sea," on Sunday, March 9th, 2008. This magical evening complete with cocktails, dinner, music by Danny Morgan, and dancing will be held at the Museum. Tickets are \$100.00 per person. Please call Mary Jo Bunnell at 395-2233 to secure your tickets.

A silent auction will be held. All members are being asked to help gather items for the auction. Please consider donating gift certificates for goods or services, gift items, artwork, jewelry, or baskets of goodies. We all have contacts in the community. The most successful fundraising takes place when the person closest to the individual makes the request. With your help this could be the best silent auction in the history of this event. Donors' names will be listed in the program and on the auction tables, providing community exposure at this highly publicized, well attended event. Please call Diane Zimmer before February 29th to arrange pick up of silent auction items.

Your friends will be disappointed if you don't include them in your personal list of raffle sales. In fact, you will want to be sure you don't miss this opportunity either. The attached picture is a mere preview of what's to come. Raffle tickets were mailed out with the event invitations. They may be purchased by mailing a check to the Museum, with "raffle tickets" on the memo line. Also, they can be purchased with a credit card in the Museum Store.

# WHAT A DIFFERENCE A SHELL MAKES

It all started at the Orlando Science Center shell sale. Five year old Jake Mitchell bought shells and from that day forward he was “hooked.” From that day until he was 14 years old Jake spent all of his spare time at the Orlando Science Center. Life was good.

Early in his “shelling career” Jake became obsessed with tree snails. He was fascinated with everything about them. It wasn’t just how they looked but how they moved, what they ate and the environments they called home.

Whenever presented with the opportunity he would buy shells and rocks. The allure of shells was supported by the books Jake’s Mom read to him.

Around his 14th birthday the “bottom dropped out” of Jake’s world. His parents moved to Tampa so his daily trips to the Science Center came to an end. Fortunately, their stay in Tampa was short lived.

In 1998 they moved again, to Naples, a much better locale for a teenager who preferred shells to the beer parties his friends attended. His parents signed him up for soccer but he got kicked off the team, not for being a bully or getting in fights but because he preferred watching the bugs on the playing field to polishing his passing and kicking skills.

School had its pitfalls as well. There was one person that understood, Mrs. Zimmerman, a teacher at Gulf Coast High School. In general, the school system didn’t quite know how to handle Jake. His giftedness became a curse rather than a blessing. He wanted to do real science. As a result, this bright student gave up on the formal education system because in essence they had given up on him, and he dropped out high school after his sophomore year.

Mrs. Zimmerman seemed to understand what it was like to be different, to be ready to work at a higher level, but forced to fit into a “pre-formed mold.” She supported his decision to leave school on one condition. She made him promise to do something meaningful with his life, a promise he’s kept well.

Carlos Point on Estero Island became Jake’s new “best friend.” He decided to strike out on his own and spend time on the beach. On a trip to John Pennekamp Coral



Reef State Park in Key Largo, Jake was reintroduced to snails.

Mike Owen and other staff members at Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and Collier- Seminole State Park trusted and supported Jake and introduced him to another of his favorite gifts of nature, orchids.

Jake kept his promise to Mrs. Zimmerman. He began working with The Shell Museum’s online identification guide. He describes himself as a low tide collector. Beach drift and rack lines are his cup of tea. Frequently, Jake found species that were not pictured in the Museum’s guide. The first time he visited The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum he put numerous tree snails on a table and took pictures of them.

Jake comes to the Museum as often as he can, usually quarterly. In all, he has identified and contributed to the Museum, six species not previously on record. His first important find was *Littoraria nebulosa* from the family Littorinidae. Talking with Jake is like conversing with the walking encyclopedia of snails. He passionately loves the sea. He says, “It’s always there, it’s accessible, there’s always something to find and it’s easy to research. I’m serious about shelling so I’ll never leave Florida.” He credits Dr. José H. Leal with providing him the encouragement to continue his research.

On a personal note, he is working in his family’s business as a dental technician. Jake’s married to someone who also appreciates shells and is writing his first book.

See what a difference a shell makes? A shell and people who cared enough to provide support and encouragement.

# DR. DOMKE VISITS THE MUSEUM



Dr. Henry Domke's idea of the perfect vacation is photographing shells at The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum. That's exactly what he did over the holidays

In high school Dr. Domke enrolled in an art-school but at the last minute decided to go into medicine. For years he was a family practice physician and fine artist. "I was lucky enough to combine both of my life's passions into two careers and divide my time two-thirds to medicine and two-thirds to art," Domke reports.

Henry didn't have time for art in medical school but in the 1980s he saw a demonstration of Adobe Photoshop and began creating digital art.

When he became a little frustrated with the technology he decided to pursue more formal training in fundamental art through distance learning. He

studied with an art professor at the City College of New York and a painting professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia. "Instead of taking new patients, I painted a lot," says Domke.

Eventually he went back to digital imaging. His father provided the perfect subject when he purchased a 180-acre farm near Jefferson City, Missouri. For decades his father bulldozed, plowed and burned grasses in an effort to create a patch of prairie.

Domke's digital prints now reside in hospital corridors and surgery centers. Domke reports, "Hospitals can be frightening so my goal is to provide a visual escape to the natural world where people can find comfort and healing."

His love affair with Sanibel began accidentally. Immediately he felt that this island was different than the rest of Florida. Domke became fascinated by shells. "It's the patterns, colors, and textures that keep me behind the camera for hours," Domke reports.

Dr. Domke's pictures can be found at the Museum Store or online at [www.henrydomke.com](http://www.henrydomke.com). The number of images available is increasing as Domke's love of the natural environment won the tug of war and he recently sold his medical practice to dedicate all of his time to capturing natural images.

## Natural Science Lecture Series

February 13: Dr. Michael Savarese, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Coastal Watershed Institute, Florida Gulf Coast University, "The Geologic History of Estero Bay: The Influence of Sea-level Rise and Climate Change"

February 27: Dr. John Cassani, Deputy Director, Lee County Hyacinth Control District, Fort Myers, "Non-indigenous Fish Communities of Caloosahatchee River Oxbows"

March 12: Dr. José H. Leal, Director, The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, "Sanibel Shells and Their Environment"

March 26: Dr. Loren Coen, Director, Marine Laboratory, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, "Oysters, More Than "Good Eats"

April 9: TBA

April 23: Mike Valiquette, Board Chairman, PURRE Water Coalition, "Water Quality: Present and Future."

# PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER HIRED



Kathleen E. Hoover has been added to the Museum's leadership team. As the Public Relations Manager, Kathleen will assist the organization with community outreach, public relations, marketing, membership growth, event planning, and fund raising.

"We are very excited about our new team member and the expertise she will lend to our endeavors," states Dr. Leal. "As past President of the Indiana Audubon Society, Kathleen brings a wealth of experience not just to the business development arena but also appreciation, education, and preservation of our natural

environment." While serving as the Audubon Society President, Ms. Hoover managed a 700-acre tract of land with 50 miles of trails and completed grant projects involving development of a "teaching wetland," and a 5-acre prairie. "Kathleen's passion for observing and protecting the environment combined with her strong relationship development background will be a significant asset as we develop and implement our strategic plan," reports Dr. Leal.

Kathleen has served as a Marketing Director for a large physician specialty group, one of our country's largest integrated health care delivery systems and a network of 2,200 community based not-for-profit hospitals. Collectively, her fund raising and sales efforts have generated millions of dollars for her employers, the American Heart Association and the Indiana Audubon Society, promoting research, education and conservation efforts.

Kathleen has traveled extensively throughout the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean as well as Central and South America - exploring and photographing natural habitats. Her participation in shell identification, bird counts, compilation of bird sighting information, authoring newsletters and delivering nature and travel presentations has contributed to scientific evidence and lured others to appreciate and protect the natural environment.

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