

# Shell Museum News

Number 53

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

Winter/Spring 2004

## From the Director

As the end of the 2003-2004 season grows closer, an opportunity presents itself for reflection and an evaluation of the Shell Museum's major endeavors and achievements during that period.

To better expose and promote the mission of the Museum, last October the Board of Trustees recommended that the Museum should open seven instead of six days a week. As of Jan. 5, 2004, the Museum opened Mondays, and records show that, as expected, attendance has increased accordingly.

In addition, the entrance fee for adults (17 and older) increased from \$5 to \$6. This decision was based on the need to offset inflation and after conducting research on the average visitation fee charged by similar organizations in the region. Generally speaking, the Museum is offering more and better programs than when it first open in 1995, and the increase in fees also reflects that.

For instance, in April 2003 the Museum opened the exhibit "Calusa - The Original Shell People." It is an awesome display of use of shells by the Southwest Florida native Calusa, and the exhibit has taken a life of its own to become a favorite of visitors.

The video *Mollusks in Action*, filmed and produced by volunteer education docent Joyce Matthys, is now a well-established presentation in the daily programs of the Museum. Mrs. Matthys received a standing ovation at the July 2003 Conchologists of America annual convention in Tacoma, Washington. She and her video were featured in March 2004 on the front page of the *Fort Myers News Press*, a daily newspaper owned by the national Gannett publishing chain.

The Adopt-a-Class program instituted by group tour and education coordinator Anna Marie Nyquist is proving to be a tremendous success. This new program seeks sponsors to fund admission and bus transportation to the Museum for Lee County public school students. Additional contributions and grants from private organizations enable the Museum to continue offering its field trip program. During their visits, the schoolchildren are exposed to the excellent activities and guided tour designed and implemented by Mrs. Nyquist and her group of dedicated docents.

Through the efforts of public relations manager Libby Grimm,  
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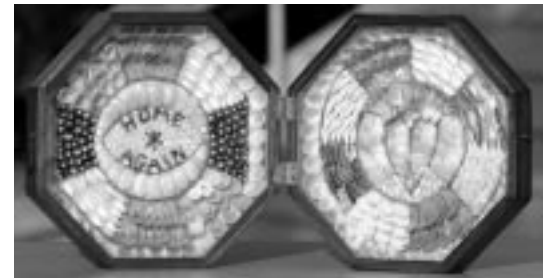
## Shell Museum ♥'s the Virtual Museum of Canada

Lovers of shells, in addition to devotees of art, history, and literature, are thrilled that the Museum collaborated with the Virtual Museum of Canada on a virtual exhibit, "Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages," available at [www.shellmuseum.org/exhibits.htm](http://www.shellmuseum.org/exhibits.htm) and also at [www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Valentin](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Valentin).

Images of the five sailors' valentines on exhibit at the Museum are featured in the virtual exhibition, which debuted a few weeks before Valentine's Day and is expected to be on line for at least five years.

"Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages" introduces visitors to a rich tradition with a multi-faceted history, from its origins in Ancient Rome to modern-day celebrations.

In addition to the Museum's contributions, this exploration of the history of Valentine's Day and its celebration around the world is done through museum and archive collections from throughout



The Shell Museum's antique sailors' valentine, "Home Again," made in the 1850s in Barbados by an unknown artist, and its untitled double sailors' valentine by the late Bert Porreca, are featured in the Virtual Museum of Canada exhibit "Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages."

Photos: José H. Leal



Canada and from the British Museum.

"Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages" is in English and French and is accessible to individuals with disabilities. The exhibit encourages the discovery of Canadian and international collections related to various facets of the Valentine's Day celebration.

Sailors' valentines are a seashell art form developed

in the early 19th century and, contrary to popular understanding, were not made by sailors in order to  
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## WHAT'S INSIDE

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## Director...from page 1

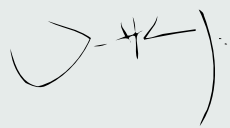
the Shell Museum is included in a large online exhibit on the subject of valentines. At the end of January 2004, the Virtual Museum of Canada (part of the Canadian Heritage Information Network) opened "Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages." It includes a section on sailors' valentines from the Shell Museum. Only two museums outside Canada are participating in this virtual exhibit, the Shell Museum and the British Museum in London.

I also want to remind our members and friends to visit the Museum Web site, [www.shellmuseum.org](http://www.shellmuseum.org). The Web site enables distant visitors to experience the Museum from the comfort of their homes or offices.

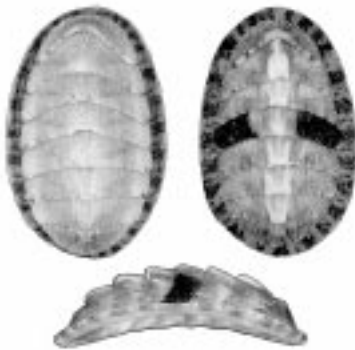
The Web site now includes extensive information about Museum exhibits and programs, as well as the online guide on the Seashells of Southwest Florida, tables of contents of *The Nautilus*, and copious information about the upcoming 70th Annual Meeting of the American Malacological Society, to be hosted by the Shell Museum July 31 to August 4, 2004.

The site was visited more than 16,000 times during the month of March, with an average of about 500 visits per day; more than 40% are repeat visitors during a given month, and about 550 pages are available for viewing.

This is all made possible with the financial assistance and encouragement of members and friends like you. Thanks again for your continued support of the Shell Museum programs!



José H. Leal, Ph.D.  
Director



Photographs of the eastern beaded chiton, *Chaetopleura apiculata*, from Sanibel Island have recently been added to the Southwest Florida Shells online guide ([www.shellmuseum.org/sanibel\\_shells.html](http://www.shellmuseum.org/sanibel_shells.html)).

Photo: José H. Leal

## Museum ♥'s the Virtual Museum of Canada...from page 1

pass time at sea but were usually assembled by women residents of Barbados and other Caribbean ports.

The images from the Museum include "Home Again," an antique sailors' valentine made in the 1850s in Barbados by an unknown artist, and an untitled double sailors' valentine made in the mid-1970s by Bert Porreca. He lived for many decades on Sanibel and died last year at age 104.

Also shown are a sailors' valentine table made in 1988 by Helen Nemirow Beck, and "With All My Love," a double sailors' valentine made in 1993 by Mrs. Beck. She divides her time between Long Island, N.Y., and Sanibel. "It Had To Be You" is a double sailors' valentine made in 1995 by Sandi Blanda, who is a resident of Long Island, N.Y., and vacations during the winter on Captiva.

"Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages" features post cards, greeting cards, heart-shaped objects, love letters, and sheet music. Audio renditions of romantic music and poetry as well as three-dimensional Valentine cards and objects are exciting additions to the site.

Cyber-visitors can even send electronic Valentine cards to their loved ones any time of the year! This user-friendly interactive E-card component is available through the virtual exhibit.

In addition to the Shell Museum, the following institutions present important contributions from their collections in the virtual exhibition "Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages:" The Provincial Museum of Alberta, Maison St. Gabriel, Cupids Museum, Fanshawe Pioneer

Village, Musée Colby-Curtis - Société historique de Stanstead, Doon Heritage Crossroads, St. Marys Museum, and the British Museum in London.

The Virtual Museum of Canada was created by the Department of Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with other government agencies, educational institutions, the private sector, and more than a thousand museums.

Since its launch in March 2001, the Virtual Museum of Canada has gained international attention and the site has recorded more than 10 million cyber-visits.

Educators and students are able to easily use the site for projects. Tourists also use the site to plan trips to museums, which now, because of "Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages," includes The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum.

## Shell Scientists Heading to Sanibel

Registrations are coming in strongly for the 70th Annual Meeting of the American Malacological Society. Hosted by the Museum, it will take place July 31 to August 4, 2004, at the Sundial Beach Resort on Sanibel.

AMS president Dr. José H. Leal and his assistant, Tina L. Yorgey, have issued the call for papers and posters. The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau is sponsoring publication of the program and abstracts. It will be printed by Ace Press of Fort Myers.

T-shirts, adorned with the logo shown below, are available for pre-paid ordering. Further information can be found on [www.shellmuseum.org/AMS/index.htm](http://www.shellmuseum.org/AMS/index.htm)



The new version of the Masters Award trophy, handcrafted in soapstone, made its debut at the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club Show in March. The trophy is awarded by the Museum and sponsored by Donald Dan of Fort Myers, Florida.

Photo: José H. Leal

## Museum News

Museum director Dr. José H. Leal's busy winter schedule included judging shells shows in Philadelphia, St. Petersburg, Florida, and Marco Island, Florida. He presented a PowerPoint program on "The Seashells of Southwest Florida" at the University of Florida's Whitney Marine Laboratory at St. Augustine. He also presented the program to the Tropicana Shell Club in Fort Myers, the Englewood (Florida) Shell Club, and The United Congregational Church of Sanibel. Dr. Leal is this year's educational grants director of the Conchologists of America and attended a COA board meeting in Tampa in March.

A shell has been named in honor of longtime Museum collection and research department volunteer Gloria Pearson of Naples, Florida. *Thalagloriae* is known from Guam, the Mariana Islands, and Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The shell ranges in size from 6.2 mm to 7.8 mm and is white with three bands of brown on the body whorl. It was named by Dr. Gary Rosenberg of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and Richard Salisbury of Boise, Idaho. They published their findings in the one of academy's publications, *Notulae Naturae*.

"Little Snails, Big Diversity: The Ptenoglossans of Sebastian Inlet (Florida's Indian River Lagoon)" was the topic of the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club meeting at the Museum on January 27. It was presented by Dr. Ellen Strong, recipient of the 2003 R. Tucker Abbott Curatorship. Dr. Strong, assistant professor in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, is also curator of invertebrates at the James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History in St. Paul.

Seventy-five Museum volunteers were honored February 16 at a luncheon at the Sundial Beach Resort on Sanibel. The volunteers contributed 7,732 hours during 2003. The program featured video footage filmed under water by snorkler and scuba diver Rick Oxton. It was narrated by his wife, Lisa, and education and group tour coordinator Anna Marie Nyquist.

At the Shell Club's February 24 meeting, Jim VunKannon of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, spoke on  
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The Museum is in its sixth academic year of offering fully-funded environmental education trips to the Museum for Lee County public school students. The program benefits about 2,500 schoolchildren from October through May, most of whom are fourth graders, like the students pictured above from Diplomat Elementary in Cape Coral. "The Shell Museum provides the best and most professional field trip experience available for Lee County," says teacher Toma Trombetti of Hancock Creek Elementary School in North Fort Myers.

"Unfortunately, transportation costs have soared," reports Museum group tour and education coordinator Anna Marie Nyquist. "So we are happy to announce that people are now 'sponsoring' individual class field trips. On average, it costs \$195 to pay for the bus and admission for each class." Persons interested in sponsoring a class may send their tax-deductible contribution to the Museum. For more information, please contact the Museum at 239/395-2233, toll-free at 888/679-6450 or e-mail [shell@shellmuseum.org](mailto:shell@shellmuseum.org).



Above left, shell show shutterbug Fay Mucha of Miami captured Conchologists of America president Tom Grace socializing with Shell Museum director Dr. José H. Leal at the Philadelphia Shell Show in February. Above right, Dr. Leal photographed noted malacological author Peter Dance of England and avid shell show participant Leslie Allen Crnkovic of Houston taking a break from the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Show in March. Mr. Dance was dining on oysters next door to the show at the well-known restaurant Island Cow. Dr. Leal also took the photo at right of a visitor enjoying the Museum's new outdoor display at the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce. The display was sponsored by Museum trustees Jon and Beverly Thompson.





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## Museum News...from page 3

"Shelling in the Turks and Caicos." He is a retired Navy captain and semi-retired from the yacht manufacturing industry. Mr. VunKannon has been active in shelling for more than 30 years and he and his wife, Carolyn, exhibit at six or seven shell shows a year throughout the nation.

The Shell Club and the Museum hosted the Annual Judges Program on March 4 at the Museum.



Students from Florida Gulf Coast University recently visited the Museum collection and research department. They are working on a project with Dr. Mike Savarese, an FGCU Environmental Science professor and Museum trustee.  
 Photo: José H. Leal

It capped the opening day of the 67th Annual Shell Show, held at the Sanibel Community House. The two speakers were the show's scientific judges: Dr. Henry Chaney, director of collections and research at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History in Santa Barbara, California, gave a talk titled, "On the Trail of Volutes." Dr. Jerry Harasewych, curator of mollusks at the Smithsonian Institution, spoke on "Shells from the Dark and Cold - An Overview of Antarctic Mollusks."

"A Naturalist's Exploration of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula" was presented by Dr. Gary Schmelz of Naples, Florida, at the March 30 meeting of the Shell Club. His program provided a photographic tour of the Kenai Peninsula, including an exploration of marine life in coastal tide pools and fossil collecting along Alaska's rugged shoreline.

Dr. Leal will be the final speaker of the Shell Club's 2003-2004 season. He will present a PowerPoint program on April 27, titled "Malacology 101." On May 11, Dr. Leal will be the featured speaker at the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce monthly "Box Lunch" meeting at the Sanibel Community Association.

Carole and Richard Smyth of Huntington, N.Y., authors and publishers of *Neptune's Treasures*, have donated their remaining stock of approximately a thousand books to the Museum Store. The paperback was published in 1998 and is "A Study and Value Guide of Antique Shell-Decorated Love Tokens, Souvenirs, and Whimsies." The Museum and Dr. Leal are thanked in the book's acknowledgments, as are eight other museums and institutions.

The Museum has lost five dedicated supporters.

"Shell Lady" **Alice Anders** was an early volunteer at the Museum Preview Center. **Mae Chiarchiaro** and **Bob Latham** volunteered as exhibit docents in the Great Hall of Shells. Calligrapher and artist **David Stark** and his wife, Jo, created Shelligram items offered in the Museum Store. **Sue Stephens'** drawings were featured for many years on Great Hall of Shells information handouts.

The Museum wishes to thank the following donors who recently contributed more than \$1,000 in designated and undesignated funds: Mrs. Helen Blomquist, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bruning of the Bruning Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Delman, Mrs. Loren Ernest, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Galloway, the Marguerite Howard Fund, Mrs. Jo Kohn of the Irving Kohn Foundation, the Marmot Foundation, Mr. George Nyquist Jr., the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation (Bailey Society Grant and Founders Grant), Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stanton, Mr. and Mrs. Jon Thompson, Mrs. J. Howard Wood, and the Kathryn W. Zimmerman Fund of the York Foundation.

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Editor: Libby Grimm  
 Layout: Tina L. Yorgey