

# Shell Museum News

Number 50

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

Winter 2003

## From the Director

The "shelling season," known elsewhere as winter, is fully upon us. With the onset of the season come great attendance at the Museum, lots of yellow school buses in the parking lot, many visitors in the collection department, and many ideas and plans for the future.

In late January, the Museum hosted a visit by Dr. R. Bruce McMillan, director of the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. Dr. McMillan visited as a surveyor for the American Association of Museum's "Museum Assessment Program" (MAP); his detailed visit report will provide the impetus for changes and improvements that shall move the Museum even closer to its mission and our standard of excellence.

The MAP surveyor report will also play an important role in the future accreditation of our organization with the American Association of Museums, acting as one of the benchmarks the accreditation team will use in its evaluation. Through this column, I will keep you abreast of the Museum's progress in this field.

At this point in the season the Museum has successfully applied for and received five grants to help support special areas: the education program received a Founders Grant from the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and a grant from the Gannett Foundation; a grant from the Bailey Society of the Community Foundation of Sanibel and Captiva for the acquisition of an automated door to facilitate ground-floor entrance of wheelchairs and handicapped visitors (this helps the Museum become more compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA); a micro-grant from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program for Museum Web master Tina Petrikas to study Front Page Web design software; and a Research Grant from the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club for the acquisition of a new Nikon digital camera that is already helping us improve on the quality of the images on our Web site, in particular those in the guide to Southwest Florida Shells.

The guide ([shellmuseum.org/sanibel\\_shells.html](http://shellmuseum.org/sanibel_shells.html)) consists of an online series of illustrations of the shallow-water marine  
(continued on page 2)

## Remembering "Betts" Johnson

The Museum lost one of its founders when longtime Sanibel resident Betty "Betts" Doan Johnson passed away in Columbus, Ohio, on Oct. 30, 2002. Mrs. Johnson served as executive director and chairwoman of the 12-member board of the nonprofit Shell Museum and Research Foundation when it formed in 1986.

The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum is her "crowning achievement," according to Mrs. Johnson's three children. They said that their beloved mother "wandered the beaches of the world looking for the perfect shell. "Mom's life was a wonderful example of how to make the most of every day. She reached for the stars and usually made it."

"I was lucky enough to have actually met Betts," said Museum director Dr. José H. Leal. "I was hired shortly before she moved from Fort Myers to Ohio. She got the Museum off the ground - did an awful lot of



Betty "Betts" Doan Johnson at an early fund-raiser for the Museum.

research on how to create a museum and get it running. She was delightful to work with and this Museum was deep inside her heart - something she was very proud of. She was on the board when I first came."

Author Bill Hallstead, a former board member, told local newspapers, "If it had not been for Betts, the Shell Museum would not be here. She galvanized us and got us all into action. I succeeded her as president of the board and found her a delight to work with. She

was very focused - certainly a hard worker on behalf of the Museum."

Sarah Bailey, widow of John Bailey of Jacksonville,  
(continued on page 2)

## WHAT'S INSIDE

[New Grants](#)

[Little Shells](#)

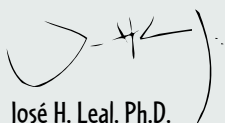
[Survey Results](#)

[Museum News](#)

## Director...from page 1

mollusks present along the coast of Southwest Florida, with emphasis on Sanibel and Captiva. This resource, which includes currently 130 out of the planned 300 species, is a pictorial guide including a systematic index, scientific and common names, maximum size in the area, and enlarged versions of the images of each species.

The remote-access guide is quickly becoming a powerful tool for educators, collectors, biologists, and environmental scientists. It also represents the framework around which I am preparing a book on the subject to be published within the next couple of years. Last but not least, the guide is a Web resource that actually helps remote users become acquainted with other Museum areas through virtual visits, and that enhances the flow of financial support to the Museum operation and general programs. Make sure you visit and tell your friends about our online guide and Web site!



José H. Leal, Ph.D.  
Director



The tiny Atlantic nut clam, *Nucula proxima*, is one of the species recently added to the Museum Web site. Photo: José H. Leal

## What a Difference a Grant Makes

Grants make a big difference in the ability of the Museum to continue such high-quality offerings as its fully funded field trip program for students of the Lee County public school system. The program costs about \$12,000 to implement each academic year and the Museum "family" is ever appreciative of the following funding and support:

Last July 1, the Museum again received a General Program Support Science Museums Grant from the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs. The most recent one-year state grant totals \$34,189, of which \$1,123 is earmarked for the student field trips.

The Museum received two new grants to help pay for transporting more than 2,000 students during academic year 2002-2003.

In November, the Museum was awarded a \$3,000 Founders Grant from the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. The program director, Carol McLaughlin, congratulated the Museum on "the fine job it is doing to improve the lives of so many Southwest Florida citizens."



Education docent Ann Tenney shows live mollusks to Lee County public school students in the Children's Learning Lab at the Museum.

Photo: José H. Leal

Also new is a Gannett Foundation grant of \$5,000 that was awarded in January. The grant process was facilitated by Carol Hudler. She is president and publisher of The News-Press in Fort Myers, which is part of the Gannett chain.

In addition, as she does each December, Mrs. J. Howard Wood of Lake Bluff, Illinois, and Fort Myers, again contributed \$3,000 to the field trip program.

Grants help the Museum in other areas as well. A 2002 Bailey Society Grant of \$2,500 will enable the Museum to purchase an automatic door opener for the ground-floor handicapped entrance.

Part of a \$3,500 Research Grant from the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club was used to purchase a digital camera. The remainder is set aside for future acquisition of metal collection cabinets.

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program has awarded the Museum a micro-grant of up to \$250, which Web master Tina Petrikas will use to study Front Page Web design. The Charlotte Harbor NEP is a partnership that protects Charlotte Harbor estuaries from Venice, Florida, to Estero Bay by improving the ecological integrity of the watershed.

## Remembering "Betts" Johnson...from page 1

Florida, said Mrs. Johnson "was a lovely, charming person and determined to get the Museum on the go. An invigorating person who got you excited."

Museum business manager Debbie Frederick met Mrs. Johnson in 1992. "She was a great person - very strong. She was the one who put in the real effort to get this Museum going."

Ms. Frederick added, "Betts was here from the very beginning, putting in overtime, and traveling all over the country to learn what a good museum

needed. She had a real passion to see this Museum born."

Mrs. Johnson was born in Denver on Nov. 18, 1918 and graduated from Kansas State University in 1940 with a journalism degree. She married Lt. Ralph Edward Young in 1942 and they had a daughter, Pamela. Lieutenant Young died of wounds he had received in the Battle of Normandy. In 1945, she married Howard Cooper Johnson, who adopted Pamela. The Johnsons had a

son, Richard, and daughter, Christina. She is also survived by seven grandchildren.

Throughout her adult years, Mrs. Johnson lived in Washington, D.C., Connecticut, New York City, the Bahamas, Aspen, Sanibel, and Fort Myers. She was involved with the Democratic Party in Connecticut, headed the volunteer program at the Institute of International Education in New York City, and spearheaded a fund-raising campaign for a new wing of the Aspen Hospital.

## Museum Gets Big Donation of Little Shells

Lois Dunnam, a longtime volunteer in the Museum collection department, recently gave the Museum "a collection of Sanibel shells with a big emphasis on micromollusks," according to director Dr. José H. Leal.

"The donation also fills many gaps in the documentation of local species," he says. "Lois spent innumerable hours walking windy beaches after storms, looking for areas of sand that had micromollusks. She borrowed a Museum microscope to work from home, sorting minute shells of a size range that is rarely noticed by most shell collectors."

Mrs. Dunnam explains, "I'd had thirty years of shell collecting on Sanibel and it was getting pretty old. So, in 1998, I started concentrating on Sanibel micromollusks. I didn't do it before.

"I hope, when I have time, to do some more. With each batch I find a shell that's never been found before on Sanibel, or even a few that have never been described. I find microscopic work fascinating. I like being out in the field and finding them in the grunge!"

## Visitor Survey Results Offer Interesting Statistics

Results are in from the visitor survey conducted by the Museum from October 2001 through October 2002. About 10 to 12 people were interviewed daily during most of the weekdays that the Museum was open, for a total of 1,071 visitors surveyed.

Those surveyed were asked if it was their first visit

to the Museum, and 81 percent said it was. They were then asked how they heard about the Museum and 31 percent said they "drove by." A total of 27 percent said they heard about the Museum "through word of mouth" and the same percentage found out about the Museum from printed matter.

Five percent said they heard about the Museum in "other" ways and 4 percent found out about it by reading the AAA Tour Book, which rates The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum as a "Gem" attraction.

Three percent said they heard about the Museum from Web sites other than the Museum Web site. About one percent of visitors found out about the Museum from its Web site, living in the area, rack cards, the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce, or a few other miscellaneous ways.

In addition to the United States and Canada, visitors came from 21 countries. Those countries range from England, France, Germany, and the Netherlands to Gabon, New Zealand, Romania, and Thailand.

The last question asked, "Did the Museum fulfill your expectations?" A total of 957 people responded in the affirmative (98.6 percent).

## Museum News

The Museum board of trustees has four new members, three of whom were previously on the board. Brand new to the board is Rob DeGennaro of Sanibel. The three returning members are Dr. Jerry Harasewych of the Smithsonian Institution, Jon Thompson of Texas and Sanibel, and Dr. Margaret Thorsen of Sanibel.

About 40 people attended a tribute to the late Dr. Harold M. M. Tovell on Oct. 14 at the Museum. Dr. Tovell, who passed away in May of 2001, became a member of the board in 1992 and assumed the presidency of the board in July of 1994. His term as president ended in December of 1997 and he stayed on as a board member.

A presentation by Dr. Leal in October kicked off the 2002-2003 meeting schedule of the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club. All meetings are held at the Museum, which helps support speaker honoraria and expenses. Dr. Daniel L. Geiger and Dr. Alan J. Kohn, recipients of the R. Tucker Abbott Visiting Curatorships for 2002, gave separate presentations during November. Lisa Kirkendale, a doctoral student in zoology at the University of Florida, spoke in January and Robert Masino gave the February presentation.

The Museum lent several shells from California's Channel Islands to the Conservancy of Southwest Florida in Naples for use in an exhibit that runs through September. The exhibit, "Jason XIV: From Shore to Sea," is an educational partnership with underwater explorer Dr. Robert Ballard.

As president-elect of the American Malacological Society (AMS), Dr. Leal accepted the offer to hold the 2004 meeting on Sanibel, with the Museum as the hosting institution. This past December, Dr. Leal and AMS treasurer Sue Cook signed a booking agreement contract with the Sundial Beach Resort for July 30 to Aug. 5, 2004. The Museum board of trustees, staff members, volunteers, and the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club have pledged their support to help host the event.

Museum board of trustees vice-president Ginny Fleming won a Bank of the Islands' charity promotion for the week of Jan. 27. She chose to split the \$500 award between the Museum and The Old Schoolhouse Theater Foundation. During the presentation, Ms. Fleming said, "The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum is a jewel in our island crown - deserving of our support and community pride."

(continued on page 4)



Tore Hoisaeter, a professor in the Department of Fisheries and Marine Biology at Norway's University of Bergen, visited the Museum in November. He is editor of *Sarsia*, a journal of North Atlantic marine science. Since his visit, the Museum library has started exchanging issues of *The Nautilus* for *Sarsia*.

Photo: José H. Leal



The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum  
Phone 888.679.6450 Fax 239.395.6706  
Post Office Box 1580  
3075 Sanibel-Captiva Road  
Sanibel Island, FL 33957

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Volunteer Myra Legg, of Sanibel, has fun in the Museum collection department trying out a reverse technique on an Australian trumpet shell. Last September, Mrs. Legg attended a ministers' wives conference in Los Angeles and during her free time, went to a taping of "The Price is Right" TV show. She told host Bob Barker about the Museum and presented him with two sand dollars.



Volunteers Peg Boutwell, Audrey Hostetter, and Kathleen Nealon join staffer Kim Poppalardo at the Museum's annual luncheon.

Photo: Charles Lister

## Museum News...from page 3

Museum trustee Sam Bailey helped design an award-winning Sanibel-Captiva exhibit that was featured at the State Fair in Tampa from Feb. 6-17. Among the displays were the Museum's contemporary shell poster, the new handouts from the Great Hall of Shells, and brochures.

On Feb. 10, about 90 Museum volunteers were honored at an annual appreciation luncheon at the Sundial Beach Resort. Volunteer coordinator Libby Grimm thanked volunteers and also thanked the trustees who contributed to the cost of the luncheon. Dr. Leal noted, "The ratio of volunteers to staff members is 10 to one. We could not have a museum without you." He gave a PowerPoint presentation of the Museum Web site and his ongoing Southwest Florida Shells project.

Parents, grandparents, child-care providers, educators, and of course, kids, enjoyed meeting acclaimed children's author Nancy F. Castaldo at the Museum on Feb. 18. She spent the day signing copies of her most recent book, *Oceans: An Activity Guide for Ages 6-9*, which is available from the Museum store.

The Canadian Heritage Information Network will use digital images of the Museum's "Sailors' Valentines" exhibit for its proposed Web-based "Valentine's Day Traditions and Celebrations" exhibition. The virtual exhibition is expected to be online for five years.

The Museum would like to thank the following people who have joined as Life Members since autumn: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bowden, Mr. and Mrs. Wally Snipes, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Weiler.

The Museum would like to thank the following donors who recently contributed more than \$1,000 in designated and undesignated funds: the Bruning Foundation, the Community Foundation of Sanibel-Captiva, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Galloway, the Gannett Foundation, Mrs. Anina Glaize, friends of the late Mrs. Betty Doan Johnson, Mrs. Jo Kohn, the Marmot Foundation, Mr. Richard Petit, The Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club, Mrs. Donna Schubert, Mrs. Elisabeth Smith, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, Mrs. J. Howard Wood, and the Kathryn W. Zimmerman Fund of the York Foundation.

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Editor: Libby Grimm  
Layout: James M. Ford