

PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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P. O. Box 1333
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Dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of "Old Pearland"

President's Message

These years seem to zip by at a much faster rate don't you think? Here it is our **Historical Society Reunion Luncheon** is right around the corner; and where did this year go? And as far as that is concerned where did the first decade of the 21st century go? It's always great to get together at the reunion; but at the same time we always miss our members who have passed away since our last one. Further in the **Newsletter** is a list of those members. In keeping with our tradition, we will be lighting candles in memory of those members at the luncheon. If you haven't got your tickets yet, please send in your reservation. We do take drop-in's at the door but also we need to give **Central Texas Barbecue** an estimate of the number of persons who will be eating lunch.

Again in this issue of the **Newsletter** are stories submitted by **Historical Society Members**. **Lucille Anthony Cox** writes of her memories of growing up with a great neighbor, **Margey Johnson**. **Tom Hunter** writes of his memories of fall in **Pearland – World Series, Halloween and Homecoming** football game and other old school memories. Both are great stories. Thanks **Lucille** and **Tom**.

Aren't we all so proud of the **Pearland Little Leaguers** who made it to the finals of the **USA Little League World Series**. They really put **Pearland, Texas** in the national eye; and the TV commentators even learned that the pronunciation is "**Pear – land**" and not "**Pearl-und**". Quite a few of our members grew up playing **Little League** ball – some even remember the first year back in 1957 when we started the youth baseball program playing on **Zychlinski Park**. One of those who commented about those days was **Tommy Hunter**, who now lives in **Denver**. **Tommy** remembered one game being halted to kill a snake out around 2nd base. I doubt any of the 2010 **Little Leaguers** will have that sort of a

memory of their great season. They will, however, have great memories of their **World Series** games, the TV exposure, the **Pearland** parade in their honor and being honored on the field at an **Astro** game.

Memories of those early years of **Little League** when games were played at **Zychlinski Park** and later at the **Lions Club Park** (present site of the bowling alley) will no doubt be just one of the topics at our **Historical Society Luncheon**. It is always a great day to see old friends and renew those old memories. If you haven't got your ticket yet, please see the reservation form at the end of the **Newsletter** and send it in. It is always a great get together and a great day to see old friends. Hope to see you there.

Mickey Mark

What's Happening

Our last **Historical Society** meeting was a combined meeting with the **Old Townsite** group. **Old Townsite Coordinator Kyler Cole** and **Danny Cameron, Public Works Director**, brought everyone there up to date on what the **City** was currently working on in "**Old Pearland**". The drainage project from **Plum St. to Town Ditch** along the west side of **Park Street** and through **Hunter Park** was mentioned and at this time is now underway.



Drain pipes going through Hunter Park

Those of you who live in **Pearland** have no doubt seen the attractive brick **Old Townsite** entrance marker at the intersection of **West Walnut and West Broadway**. The marker is now finished and looks great. Nice to see the old townsite recognized. For those who haven't seen it, see photo below.



Old Townsite Marker

We are expecting to work out an agreement with the **City** regarding using the "Old Depot" for a **Historical Museum** sometime in **October**.

Also at our July meeting bronze plaques were presented to **Luther Cunningham** and **Larry Johnston** for their **Pearland Historical Society** historic homes both of which were built in 1910. Also though not present at the meeting **Peggy and Edwin Long** were awarded a plaque for their historic home on **Houston Ave.** also built in 1910 or 1909.



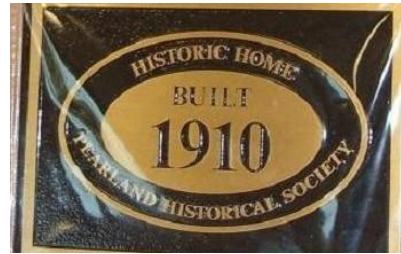
Luther Cunningham with Historic Home Plaque



Larry Johnston with Historic Home Plaque



Edwin and Peggy Long : (Although not at the July meeting, they received a bronze plaque (below) for their historic home on **Houston Ave.**)



Our **Historic Home Committee** is headed by **Dwight Bittick**. **Dwight** does a great job of researching the history of old **Pearland** homes and of their owners through the years. Additional historic homes in the **Old Townsite** will be receiving plaques as they qualify and voted on by **Historical Society** members.

Among our Members

Society Member Larry Garner passed away **August 30th**. Larry was the son of **Phil and Gladys Garner** and for many years ran the **Garner's Cleaners** business on **Grand Blvd**. **Larry** and his twin, **Lonnie**, were the youngest of the **Garner** family. **Larry** was preceded in death by brothers, **Eugene, C.L. and A.C.**, and sister **Naydean**. He is survived by his wife, **Johnnie Mae**, and brothers **Lonnie, Wayne and Milton**.

Society Member and long time **Pearlander Tom Alexander** passed away **Sept. 26th**. **Tom** was one of the

10 children of **Charles and Helen Alexander**. Of the five boys now only the youngest, “**Jud**” is still living. Four of the five girls, **Mary, Sue, Pat and Liz** are still living. The **Alexander** family played a major role in the history of **Pearland**. **Alexander Middle School** on **Old Alvin** is named in honor of the **Alexander Family**. Also when **Pearland** incorporated in 1959 Tom was one of the **City Councilmen** elected in **Pearland’s** first City Election. Our sympathies go out to **Betty**, daughters **Harriet, Diana and Cindy** and to son **Tom, Jr.**

Historical Society Member and long time **Pearlander, Aubrey Ellis**, passed away Sept. 28th after undergoing heart surgery at St. Lukes Hospital. **Aubrey** was a 1956 PHS grad. He was preceded in death by brothers **William Ellis, Marvin Ellis, M.W. Ellis and Frederick Ellis** and sisters **Lilly Nelson and Elsie Krell**. He is survived by his wife **Martha**, son **Randy Ellis** and daughters **Missy and Cindy** and brothers **Donald Ellis and Philip Ellis**. **Aubrey** was another one of those “really good guys”. He also at one time was on the **Pearland City Council**. Our deepest sympathies go out to **Martha** and family.

Ben Whatley, husband of **Society Member Fay Talbot Whatley**, passed away September 25th after a prolonged illness. **Ben and Fay** have been regular attendees at our **Reunion Luncheon** each year. **Ben** was a good guy who got along with everyone. We will miss him at the Luncheon.

Long time **Pearlander Elaine Lane** passed away Aug. 16th after a long illness. **Elaine**, who would have been 90 this **December**, was secretary to the **Pearland School Superintendent** for 30 years before retiring. Daughter **Ann Lane Crosswhite** is a member of the **Historical Society**.

Pearlander Marvin Gatlin passed away in mid **August**. Many of you will remember Marvin was married to **Kay Smith** (daughter of **Louella and Albert (Smitty) Smith**) before she passed away.

Ann Dempsey, widow of **Colonel Jack Dempsey**, and Mother of **Historical Society member Jack Dempsey, Jr.** passed away **September 25th in Norfolk, Va.;** and was buried in **South Park** next to **Mr. Jack**. Many of our older members remember **Ann** from the days when she and son, **Jack, Jr.**, lived with **Mrs. Bessie Dempsey** in the **Dempsey** home on the corner of **Jasmine and Main**. Although **Jack Dempsey** left **Pearland** just prior to **WWII** and **Ann** only spent a short time here, they maintained their ties to **Pearland**

and were always interested in stories about **Pearlanders** in the **Newsletter**.

Former **Pearlander** and 1958 **PHS** grad **Lynn Crawford** passed away Sept. 23. Our sympathies go out to sisters **Sharon and Peggy** who were also in the 1958 **PHS** class.

Emma Jamison Wells (**Pearland's** oldest native born citizen) fell in her home and spent some days in the hospital. She had no broken bones but has other serious medical problems and is now in **Windsong Village Convalescent Center, Room 213**, in **Pearland**. Her sister, **Florence Jamison Gum**, says **Emma** is up to having visitors and hopes some of her old friends can drop by and visit with her.

Also **Edwin Long** has some health problems and is currently in **The Hampton** on **Scarsdale**. Quite a few of our members are now in assisted living facilities in the **Pearland** area. Those I know of are **Claudia Martin, Margey Johnston, Basil and Carrie Mae Cogbill, Ernest Cogbill, and Wanda Nichols**. I am sure there are more. Those are the ones who immediately come to mind.

Those of you on the **Historical Society** e-mail list are aware of the battles some of our members are enduring health wise. Our **Secretary, Brenda Martin Riggs**, is currently in the **Triumph Rehab** center in **Clear Lake** fighting blood infection. **Quinton Jamison** recently had colon surgery, spent some time in **Windsong** and is now home but still recovering. Keep all of our members who have lost family members or having health problems in your prayers.

“Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished. If you're alive, it isn't.”

~Richard Bach

Members lost in 2010

One on the touching traditions at the **Historical Society Luncheon** is the lighting of individual white candles for members who passed away since the last luncheon and a single large red candle for relatives of members and old time **Pearlanders** who passed away during the last year. The beautiful candle holder pictured below was made by **Society Member David Scott**, **Pearland’s** oldest native born male citizen. At the time of printing of the **Newsletter**, we have lost the following members.

*Richard Bittick , Larry Garner, Betty Jane Cook
Beauchamp, Luciele Seger Anderson, Virgle Wood
Hawk, Hazel Skinner Muetz, Mamie Watson
Williamson, Nina Hill, Tom Alexander, Aubrey Ellis*



Eunice Jones – 100 July 25th



**Mary Lee Smith Miller with Mickey Mark at her 100th birthday party Aug. 22nd.
(Picture courtesy Ben Lenamon)**

Now for Some Good News

Congratulations go out to **Sidney and Reba Eddings Kliesing**. Sid and Reba celebrated 60 years of marriage **July 29th**.



Reba & Sidney Kliesing

Historical Society Members Celebrate 100th Birthdays

Two of our **Historical Society** members have recently celebrated their 100th birthdays. **Eunice Martin Jones** turned 100 on July 25th with a birthday celebration in **Wisconsin** where **Eunice** is living in an assisted living facility near her daughter, **Myrnicce**.

Mary Lee Smith Miller celebrated her 100th birthday with a big birthday party at **Holly Hall** where she has lived for quite a number of years. **Mary Lee's** party was almost like our **Reunion Luncheon** - - great to see so many old time **Pearlanders**.

Congratulations to both **Eunice and Mary Lee**. Don't they both look great.

Speaking of age, I recently saw this quote to which most of us can certainly relate.

“Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what happened”

Reunion Luncheon

Have you made your reservations for the Historical Society Annual Reunion Luncheon on Saturday, October 23rd yet? If not, please see the reservation form attached and make your reservation for a day of renewing old friendships and enjoying a good barbecue lunch. This year the class of 1960 will be the honored class.

Speaking of the class of 1960, **Brenda Martin Riggs**, sent this picture which includes 4 members of the class of 60. Apparently these youngsters were at a dance recital when they were 10 years old or so. Thanks, **Brenda...**



L:R: Carolyn Garner McCoy (59), Cookie Martin (60), Robert Suttle (60), Glenda Grimes (59), Becky Wilson (60)



Lucille Anthony Cox and Phil Curry at H.S. Luncheon

Thanks to **Lucille Anthony Cox** for the story below. It brings back a lot of memories as to what **Pearland** life was like when **Margey Johnston** came to **Pearland** in 1943 and the years thereafter.

Margey Johnston

I have had many wonderful friends in my lifetime but Margey Johnston is definitely one of the best. She was born and raised in Arkansas. She arrived in Pearland in 1943 when she was 20 years old. She came to visit her brother and his family, Bill and Helen Duvall and their 5 children. Bill worked at the Crossroads Inn for his Uncle Charlie. The Inn was located on Highway 35 and Farm

Road 518. Old Timers will remember that it was located at what was later known as Jack Miller's Filling Station. When Margey came to Pearland she stayed with the Duvall family. They were leasing their home from the Tud Johnstons. Bill, Helen, and their children Clyde Henry, Homer Lee, Dorothy Dean, Lillie Jane, and Thelma Jean lived on Austin Street behind the home of the Tud Johnston family. Tud and Thelma Johnston had 4 children Harold Dean (Buck), Gene, Lorraine (Sis), and Tunney. The Johnston children were born in Pearland. Margey took care of the Duvall children while Helen kept house for the Johnstons 6 days a week. Helen could easily walk to the Johnston home. At that time, Tud owned the land where the Duvall's lived. It is a large white two story house and is still standing today. It is currently owned by R.E. and Dorothy Maness. When the Duvall's moved out, R.E.'s parents bought the house and they lived there for many years. Thelma Duvall remembers using a dish of soapy water and an old empty thread spool to blow bubbles down the stairs of the house when they were children, she called it "inventiveness by necessity."

Buck and Gene farmed rice on leased land for many years. The land that they leased is now called "The Pearland Town Center". Margey and Buck married 6 months after she came to Pearland. The Johnston Brothers were rice farmers and they baled hay on the side. They farmed land they leased from Mrs. Phillips who later willed 100 acres to Tud Johnston. The land is located on Farm Road 518. Margey said that the Johnstons baled hay on Alexander land and many other properties in Manvel. When people needed their land mowed, the Johnston Brothers would mow and bale the hay, and sell it to farmers who needed it to feed their livestock.

When my parents moved to Pearland in the early 40's, Tunney, Margey's brother-in-law, and Clyde and Homer, her nephews visited the Anthony Dairy on 518 to meet the owners and watch my parents milk the cows.

They asked them if they could come back promising to bring them one of Margey's pies. They assured them that she baked really good pies. Margey said it was a lemon pie. That visit began a friendship that has lasted for close to 70 years.

Margey drove trucks and a Case Tractor to help with the hay bailing and hauling. When asked if she ever drove a car during that time, she said that she moved trucks and cars that were in the way for the people who were visiting or helping. Later when she and Buck moved to Harkey Road, she mowed their 8 acres of land with a push mower. She had her first child, Jerry Buck Johnston, after 5 years of marriage. At that time, she left the field and stayed home to raise the children and keep house. They

had 4 children, Jerry, Randy, Ricky, and Kathy. Margey never drove a car again but she cooked for the men and children. I can remember shucking corn, snapping green beans, and picking out pecans in her kitchen, and also playing with the children. They shared food with us for many years like family.

Tud Johnston helped to plow the South Park Cemetery with his horses. He was paid with 12 lots in the cemetery. Many of the Johnston family members are buried there today.

Margey told me that on Tunney and Frankie's wedding day, Buck was dressed in his Tuxedo and headed for the church to be the best man, but as he passed the Anthony Dairy, he saw the cows out in the road. He stopped; dressed in his tux and put the cows back in the pasture for us and secured the fence. This was normal procedure for our awesome neighbors. Margey and Buck lived in their house on Harkey Road for many years and it is still there today. People like Margey and Buck Johnston don't come around but once in a lifetime. How fortunate I am to have my memories.

Ben Anthony my Dad once said "In the old days, if your cows got out, the Johnston boys would come by and put them back in the pasture and secure your fence, then come by and tell you where the fence was weak and leave with a promise of coming back tomorrow to help you fix it." He said that "nowadays if anybody sees your cows out, they run over them and then sue you for damages to their car or truck."



Margey & Buck Johnston with David Anthony Cox (Lucille's son) – 1985

Pictured below are **Lloyd Hawkins** and **Tom Hunter** at one of our **Historical Society Luncheons**. Earlier we wrote about the **Pearland Little Leaguers** putting **Pearland** on the map; and reminisced about youth baseball starting in **Pearland** in 1957 with 44 boys ages 9 through 12. **Lloyd** and **Tom** were two of those original 44 players. Tom wrote the story below about his memories of **Pearland** in the 50's and also about the school colors of maroon and white (which is a sensitive subject for many long time **Pearlanders**). When you attend a **Pearland**

Oilers game now and see our players all decked out in "black", you sometimes wonder if you are looking at the **Pearland Oilers**. Thanks, **Tom**, for the memories. **Tom** will be at our luncheon **October 23rd**; and I imagine there will be a few others of the original 44 who will be reliving memories.



Lloyd Hawkins and Tom Hunter

Old School Colors

Fall is my favorite season especially October, which in the 1950s began with the World Series and ended with the school carnival at Halloween in Pearland--with football season nearing Homecoming. A few years ago, I flew down for the historical society luncheon and the next day walked around the old town site taking pictures. From the lot where Mrs. Alexander's rental house stood on the east side of the boulevard near Walnut Street, I took the same path as I did attending first through fourth grades, and walked up toward the old elementary school campus at Grand Boulevard and 518. The buildings, which housed several community colleges, were open and I entered the same door next to the Auditorium as I had on my first day of school in September of 1953.

A flood of memories came reeling as I looked down the ramp of the boys restroom where someone could stand with his right arm and leg outstretched and make it appear in the marble veneer as if he were suspended in midair. Next door was my first grade classroom, where I remembered Henri Jean Smalley and me being stumped over the pronunciation of a strange new word in our reader, "mosquitoes," which we somehow rendered as "MOSKY-toes" until corrected by our teacher, Mrs. Phippen. As I passed Miss Holitzke's second grade classroom, I recalled her arithmetic test in which the sum of the first nineteen questions added up to nineteen--except the last one, whose answer was twenty. On that day long ago, she cured many of us of making lazy assumptions. Across the hall, I looked in

Mrs. Prensner's third grade classroom, whose windows looked out through the trees to Grand Boulevard, and remembered one of her afternoon storytelling sessions: that of Absalom being undone by pride in his long hair, which caught in the boughs of an oak tree, snatched him from his mule, and left him hanging: Her lesson on vanity. From her room I turned left up the hall near the school's main entrance and stopped abruptly at the dreaded Principal's Office, where Mr. C.J. Harris held sway. To this day, being asked to go to someone's "office" gives me pause. Up the hall on the right opposite the girl's restroom, was Mrs. Fry's fourth grade class, which had a view of the open playground and the homes on Park Street. During the week leading up to the carnival, teachers and pupils decorated the classrooms and hallways with the usual staples of the season of pumpkins, jack-o-lanterns, arched-back cats, and the ever popular flying witch silhouetted against a full moon.

Out the exit on the north end of the elementary school once stood the Old Gym, a one-story remnant of the original two-story brick high school building that was sheared off by severe winds in the Great Storm of 1915. The roof leaked and warped the floor of the basketball court, and the low ceiling blocked any high-arching jump shots. A raised stage stood behind the backboard on the north end and served as a miniature haunted house for smaller children during Halloween Carnival. High school kids would hide in the folds of curtains in the darkened back stage and make spooky sounds or shine a flashlight up under their chins. But the main attraction on the gym floor was the Cake Walk, done to musical chairs. Once I actually made it to the final round, just me and an older lady circling a single chair, but when the music stopped and I turned to sit down, she wheeled round the front, hip-checked me, and won the seat. And took the cake. My first encounter with full-contact musical chairs.

Outside, between the east wall of the gym and the merry-go-round, see-saws, monkey bars, and swings of the playground was the heart of the carnival for me: bean-bag toss, the stacked milk bottle throw, but you had to knock all the bottles off the platform--or no cigar. Or if you could spot your fastball, you could wing one at the bulls-eye that was rigged to the dunk seat and drop your favorite teacher into the water tank. You could get a ten-cent pony ride or put your money down at the kissing booth or head off for the hayride and hop on the horse-drawn hay wagon and try to steal a kiss for free. With a full Hunter's Moon and a chill in the air, it was the best night of the year.

At the end of the evening you could hear the auctioneer's call as he rattled off numbers and words--that I couldn't quite fathom--for the bidders at the livestock auction.

When I finished daydreaming by the "new" annex, I walked down the sidewalk by the front steps of the elementary school, where we used to have our class pictures made and headed back to the Auditorium--the place of school assemblies, theatrical productions, baccalaureate services, teen club movies, and where we learned our baseball team assignments for the first little league in 1957--and of course, the site of the Coronation of the King and Queen of The Carnival. Occasionally, the crowning of the Homecoming Queen took place around the same time, and the high school pep squad girls came by selling maroon or white ribbons with "Go Oilers!" Or "Beat the (Visitors)!" In first grade in the fall of 1953, I attended my first Pearland Oiler football game and adopted as my favorite player, junior running back Weldon Flanakin, "Number 56 on the program, but number one in your heart," as the old school announcers used to say.

I left the Auditorium and walked by the building where I attended the fifth and sixth grades with Mrs. Wright and Mr. McCarthy--but it was originally the first high school or at least the only one to survive long enough to produce a graduating class. The setting sun and the long shadows created an eerie orange glow around the old school.

In keeping with this season of haunted houses and disembodied spirits, I've heard some scary tales: one from a graduate of PHS about being asked to donate her copies of The Gusher annuals because the ones at the school had been lost or discarded, and someone else's heart-breaking story of how decades of high school game-films had been tossed in the dumpster--including a COLOR MOVIE of a football game from the fall of 1946 between Pearland and Kinkaid, back in the six-man era of Coach Lloyd Hawkins, who bought brand-new maroon pants and jerseys and arranged for a photographer to film the game. But the darkest deed of all has been the flouting of tradition by substituting a new color scheme, relegating our original colors of maroon and white to mere trim.

My father, Robert Hunter, was a member of the first graduating class of Pearland High School in 1938. He also earned a varsity letter that year, a dark maroon "P" that I still have and treasure more than any of my own old letter jackets. He and his classmates--Victor Tholen, Leo Lane, Ernest Cogbill, Maurine Maynor,

Leon Moore, Jimmie Poynter, Bob Hood, Mildred Long, Joyce McCullar, Claude Hood, Beatrice Wood, and Dorothy Wood--selected the mascot, "Oilers," named the school newspaper, "The Gusher," and chose the colors, "Maroon and White." Maroon--not unlike the redish-brown crude pumped up from beneath the derricks in the oil fields at Hastings. Most of what I know about that time comes from my conversations with Mrs. Oleta (Campbell) Hawkins, the faculty sponsor of the class, who also told me about putting together and designing the first issue of The Gusher.

Before I left that day and walked back to my car, I read the Texas State Historical marker in front of "The 1937 Pearland High School" building. Somewhere midway through the text, I found the following sentence, "The colors were deep maroon and white." Deep maroon. And white. And still--at least for me and a few other old diehards--our true colors. Like orange and black on All Hallows Eve. Trick or Treat?

Tommy Hunter - - PHS '65

Fig Preserves Like The Old Fig Plant Made

Much has been written about the impact of figs to the economy of old time Pearland. Josie Heflin always stated that the old fig plant was the biggest economic boon ever to hit Pearland. Society Member Alfred Borm over at San Marcos recently sent through an e-mail letting us know where to buy fig preserves like those from the old fig plant. Here is Alfred's e-mail:

"Mary's mother, Dora, worked at the "fig plant" quite a lot, though I don't think she still did after the time I moved to Pearland. She also canned lots of fig preserves at home. I didn't care much for them, since she always ground the figs to a pulp instead of leaving some chunks of fruit, but the flavor was grand.

Anyhow, I looked a long time for a commercial brand that would have something like the flavor of her fig preserves. The best I have found is St. Dalfour Royal Fig, which we buy in 10 oz bottles at HEB, in case you want to pass on that endorsement from someone who really likes figs."

Thanks to Alfred; and to those who go to HEB and buy the fig preserves (as I intend to do) think about the impact of the fig industry to this town and be thankful we don't live in "Figland".

Don't forget the regular quarterly meeting of the Pearland Historical Society Tuesday, October 19th at 7:00 P.M. at the Knapp Senior Center on Park St. This meeting will again be a joint meeting of the Historical Society and the "Old Pearland Neighborhood Group." Come and find out what is going on in "Old Pearland".

As usual cookies, coffee, cold drinks and visitation with old friends follows the meeting. See you there.

Be A Friend
by Edgar A Guest

*Be a friend. You don't need money:
Just a disposition sunny;
Just the wish to help another
Get along some way or other;
Just a kindly hand extended
Out to one who's unbefriended;
Just the will to give or lend,
This will make you someone's friend.*

*Be a friend. The pay is bigger
(Though not written by a figure)
Than is earned by people clever
In what's merely self-endeavor.
You'll have friends instead of neighbors
For the profits of your labors;
You'll be richer in the end
Than a prince, if you're a friend*

Don't miss the annual Reunion Luncheon, Saturday, October 23rd from 11:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at the Pearland Community Center on Liberty Drive. "Be a Friend". Please purchase your tickets by October 15th. See you there.

