

PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Pearland Historical Society

P. O. Box 1333

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Dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of "Old Pearland"

President's Message

In the **twenty-three** years I have been doing this **newsletter**, this one has been the toughest to get done. My old computer crashed around the first week in **March**. When I took it to **Office Depot**, they checked it over and said I really should replace it. They also said they could get all the information out of the old computer and put it in my new one.

I agreed and bought a new **Hewlett Packard** with windows 10. My old computer had windows vista.

After two or three days I was told by **Office Depot** that they couldn't get the information out of my old computer so I took it to a local shop and was told he could do it. He did; but in doing we lost nearly all of my current files and saved files from 07 and 08. So I have lost all my mailing addresses and current e-mail addresses. Hopefully everyone who was getting the **Newsletter** will get this copy. Also, please send me an e-mail with your current e-mail address so I can once again get e-mail addresses to send out information about our members in between our regular meetings.

Just a reminder, please remember our annual reunion is **Saturday, October 28th**. We will be honoring the graduating class of **1967**.

Also please note further in the **Newsletter** is a notice from our **Treasurer, Peggy Long**, regarding a change in procedure for paying for the luncheon.

Hope to see you at our next meeting which is **April 20th**.

Mickey Mark

What's Happening

Recently **Luther Cunningham** and I met with representatives from **Horizan Montessori Charter Schools** to discuss the historical old **Pearland High School** on **Grand Blvd**. **Horizan** has plans to buy the entire complex which has been vacant since **Alvin Community College** moved out several years ago. Their plans are to open a charter school for grades one through five this **August** and then go through the 8th grade the next year. What they were wanting to know was what sort of restrictions were about making changes to an historical landmark.

They had assumed that the entire complex was the old **1937 high school** which has the **Texas Historical Marker**. **Luther** and I gave them the history of the complex and told them the only building which would have any restrictions would be the **1937 building**; and that does not include restrictions on modifications to the inside of the building. Any changes to the exterior would have to be approved by the **Texas Historical Commission**.

The **Horizan** representatives were somewhat concerned about their meeting with the **City of Pearland** about permits to open the school. The **City** had told them that they could not use **Grand Blvd.** for parking and would have to build their own parking lot – which would mean having to tear down a building somewhere in the complex, probably the old shop building and the one next to it. Also if the **Charter School** does go in they will have to have an iron fence around the entire complex

Luther and I were both pleased to hear that the complex would remain a school, which is what all **Pearlanders** can ever remember it being. Also we were perplexed as to why the **City** mandated their having to build a separate parking lot since **Alvin College** had use of it for parking. The **Horizan** people were somewhat frustrated with the slowness of the **City** since their next meeting was not scheduled until **April 19th**.

 Most of our **Historical Society** members are very familiar with the story of the old high school which became a **Texas historical landmark** on **August 6th** back in **2001**. In looking back in the files of our **Historical Society** I found this story written by **Marguerite Massey Smith** for the historical marker ceremony at the old high school in 2001.



Marguerite Massey Smith and Mayor Reid at Zychlinski Park dedication 2007

Marguerite was a member of the PHS graduating class of 1939. She was a diligent **worker** in gathering historical information about **Pearland** and **Pearland High School**.

Summary of the old Pearland High School 1937 – 1953

As Told By Marguerite Massey Smith

It was the summer of 1915. The Pearland town people were too busy to notice that the wind was picking up to a strong gale until people began boarding up their houses. Shortly afterwards a 120 miles per hour storm was rushing in from the Gulf of Mexico. By the morning of August 16, 1915, the whole town had been demolished --- even the brand new high school's 2nd floor was split to pieces. Many of the Pearland seniors were ready to go back to the ice and snow of the mid-west. The Santa Fe railroad even offered free passage. But they stayed and built a town around the little park Wilhelm Zychlinski had dedicated them in 1894. The first story of the new high school was revamped as an elementary school; but the high school students had to be bussed to Webster, Texas for 4 years to complete their high school education. This presented all sorts of problems for the students of the farm families. It meant getting up at 4:00 A.M. instead of 5:00A.M. to milk the cows, clean up, get ready for school and climb on a flat bed wagon to take them to the old high school location to catch another bus to take them to Webster – 14 miles away. Quite a hardship.

Because there were not enough people in Pearland to float a bond for a new high school and pay for it for the next 22 years, a bus load of students left each school morning for Webster high school for the next 22 years. During the depression years of the 30's things began to happen. The Hastings and Manvel oil fields were providing jobs. The town grew enough and the struggling parents

began to think in terms of a bond for a new high school in Pearland.

Twenty six Pearland residents signed a petition for a bond for \$35,000 to build a new high school, a combination gymnasium-auditorium and for an older auditorium to be converted into 3 class rooms. When the bond issue was presented to the voters the vote was 66 votes “yay” and 5 votes “nay”. A tax of .25 per \$100 valuation was levied in the Pearland School District – called Common School District #1. J. Paul Rogers was Brazoria Cjounty School Superintendent. The three member school board was George M. Wall, President, C. C. Oblinger, Secretary and F. E. Moore.

The Morgan Bouiffle Construction Company built the new facility in time for the opening of the school year in Sept. 1937. The opening of the new high school was indeed a joyous occasion. The children were at home together. The school board wisely hired Mr. B. B. Ainsworth as school superintendent. Ainsworth’s goal was to get Pearland High School state accredited in that first school year. To accomplish that goal, he assembled the greatest 6 man team of teachers a beginning school could ever expect. For this monumental task, Ainsworth hired Bill Wall as principal and teacher of mathematics. Lloyd Hawkins was coach of boys sports and teacher of biology, general science and physics. Virginia Ainsworth would man the library, Fay Brookshire Hunter would teach Spanish 1 and all English classes. Oleta Campbell Hawkins, who graduated from college at age 18 and with 2 years teaching experience, would teach business law, general business training, typing I, shorthand and Spanish II. Supt. Ainsworth taught Texas history, Government and U. S. History. In the fall of 1938, Hazel Skinner Muetz was added to the staff to teach Home Economics.

In the fall of 1937, 58 students would study the subjects and take the tests required for Pearland to become accredited. Our brand new high school had four class rooms, a science laboratory, a

library with a work room and an office for Supt. Ainsworth and Principal Billy Wall. The student body voted on the school colors - - deep maroon and white. The football team would be called the “Oilers”. The yearbook was the “Gusher” and the school newspaper the “Pipeline”.

The powerful teaching staff and students took many tests to get Pearland High School accredited that initial school year – 1937/38. It has been 64 years now since the struggling little farm community of Pearland opened the doors of its new high school. Its first students are now great grandparents. Asked if the effort was worth it, one of those great grandparents said, “you had better believe it. When my great grandchild plays the trombone in the high hool band and they play the National Anthem before the start of a football game, the thrill of it all is still there. The blood boils.

From butchering hogs and to frying sausage on wood burning stoves, to frozenfood, microwave ovens and self cleaning ovens, the old timers suffered through many a trial and error to build a brighter future for their children and their grand kid to come. They did it

(Editor’s Note: It would be nice if the Pearland High School athletic department would read the history of PHS and remember our school colors have always been maroon and white - - and not black and maroon.)



Four teachers when PHS opened in 1937. L/R Principal Billy Wall, teachers Fay Brookshire Hunter, Oleta Campbell Hawkins & Lloyd Hawkins

City video of “Old Settlers Cemetery

Recently I was contacted by **Mike Webb** with the **City** saying he would be doing a video about the **Old Settler’s Cemetery** and would like for **Diane Kropp** and me to participate. Most of you know the **Old Settler’s Cemetery** is another **Historic Landscape** with a **Texas Historical** marker. **Mike** interviewed **Diane** and me for the video. I am not sure when the video will be on the **Pearland** web site

One interesting thing was that **Diane** had updated her book about the **Old Settler’s Cemetery**. When she put the book together originally we didn’t have all the information about **Zychlinski and Mark Belt** which **Tom Hunter and Dwight Bittick** found over the last few years. It is a great book with lots and lots of information not only about the cemetery but also about **Pearland** history and old time **Pearland** families. We will have the book at our **Historical Society** site. **Diane** asked we throw away the previous book and replace it with the new one. Will do, **Diane**, thanks for a great job. I will have **Diane’s** book at our meeting on **April 20th**.

I believe **Carleen’s Aunt, Marie Davidson** was the last person buried in the old cemetery. She passed away in **1970** and is buried in the **Davidson** family plot. Also old time **Pearlanders** often told of seeing

new graves pop up over night with no one knowing who was in the grave. **Dianne Kliesing Day** has been putting in a lot of work trying to get some further identification of graves at the “**old cemetery**”. Hopefully she will have a report for us at the next meeting.

In an interview for the **Newsletter** several years ago **Lois Hunter Bundy** recalled that on **Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1918**, which was the end of **WWI**, the people of **Pearland** met at the old depot and marched down to the cemetery and had a celebration picnic.



Old Settler’s Cemetery

More on Class of 1967

Thanks to **67 grad Mike Wade** for supplying more info on the honored class of **1967**. First, in the last issue of the **Newsletter**, I listed the members of the class and **Mike** reminded me I had left out **Robert King**. When **Mike** told me I had left **Robert** out, my thoughts went back to the early days of **Little League** baseball when we played games at **Zychlinski Park**. **Robert** was one of the best pitchers I had in the several years I managed the **Braves** in the **Little League**.

Mike has been working hard contacting class members and getting info on them. He will have a report at our next meeting. He has contacted 56 of the 84 class members. So far he has found ten members who have passed away. They are **Wayne Bethune, Don Carbone, Donna Farmer, Frank Fernandez, June Hoke, Mark Matocha, Leslie Sallee, Nancy Worrall, Ruth Warren and Larry Tierney**

These are the ones **Mike** is aware of who have passed away. Also **Mike** says they will be having a party at **Green Tee Country Club** the night of our annual luncheon.

We will be sending out invitations to the members of the **67 class** in early **June**.

Among our members and old time Pearlanders

As mentioned earlier in the **Newsletter**, my computer has been down and I haven't been able to get as many updates as normal.

Carolyn Yost e-mailed recently that **1963 grad Willie Rains** had passed away. Many of our old timers will remember **Willie** as an outstanding lineman on the **Oilers** team of **1962**, which was one of the best teams the **Oilers** have had. **Willie** was a lineman who was great on defense and also great at opening holes for his brother, **running back Wayne Rains**, who also was one of **Pearland's** all time greats.

Former **Pearland County commissioner Jack Harris**, passed away recently. **Jack** was our **County Commissioner** for quite a number of years and a long time member of the **First Methodist Church**. **Jack** was in **Windsong Village Nursing Home** for quite a while before passing.

Susan Smith Lenamon sent an e-mail on **April 1st** advising that her **Dad, Society Member David Smith** is back in **Southeast Memorial Hospital** with pneumonia. In the last issue of the **Newsletter**, we reported that **David**, who is **90** years old, was

now a permanent resident of **Trinity Oaks**. In an update e-mail **April 8th**, **Susan** wrote "Daddy is still in **ICU at MHSE** battling pneumonia. He is progressing but slowly. We hope he will go to a regular room **Sun. or Mon.** and then be back at T.O. By this time next week." Keep **David** and family in your prayers and hopefully he will soon be back at **Trinity Oaks**.

Jack McGuff went into the hospital **March 27th** with pneumonia. He was released **April 14th** and is temporarily staying with his son and daughter-in-law; but hopes to return home soon. Keep **Jack** in your prayers.

Also in the last issue we reported **Jennie Talbot and Carleen Mark** were both going through some rough times healthwise. **Carleen**, who has atrial fibrillation, has been going through home therapy and is much stronger than she was back in **January**. Hopefully she will continue to regain her strength.

Carl reports that **Jennie** is still encountering the same problems as reported in the last **Newsletter**. She is still unable to put any weight on the hip which was broken.

Please continue to keep **Jennie, Carleen** and any other members who are going through rough times physically in your prayers.

Update on Pearscape Project

As you may remember **Kim Sinistore, Executive Director of the Pearland Convention and Visitors Bureau** recently attended our Historical Society meeting and told us about a project called **Pear-Scape** where 4 ft. tall fiberglass pears painted by local artists would be clustered within **City Parks**, one of which is **Zychlinski Park**, and highly visible locations determined by a committee. Our **Historical Society** purchased one of the pears which is to be placed in **Zychlinski Park**. **Kim** advises that all of the projected pears have been

purchased and are in the process of being made and our pear for **Zychlinski Park** should be in place sometime in **May**.

SAVE THE DEPOT PROJECT

Kim Sinistore also formed a committee which met last **January** to discuss“saving the ”**old historic depot**” project. The purpose of the committee is to gather information about engineering and construction costs for refurbishing the old depot. **Don Hays** reports that the committee has participation from several groups including the **Chamber of Commerce, City of Pearland, Pearland Alliance for Arts and Culture, Pearland Leadership Class, Keep Pearland Beautiful, Pearland Historical Society, Pearland Parks Board** and potentially the **Pearland Lions Club**. The committee met and will continue to meet approximately every quarter. **Don** also encourages visiting the “**Save the Depot**” facebook page to learn more about the project. In the past we have met with the Parks and Recreation Dept. to discuss refurbishing the depot; but the cost was out of range for our **Historical Society** to take on the project by ourselves. Hopefully the committee will come up with a plan. As most are aware, the old depot is the oldest building still standing in **Pearland**.



Old Depot next to City Hall

Oldest Native Born Pearlanders

One interesting thing about all of my computer problems was looking at **e-mails, Newsletters**, etc. that go as far back as **2007**. One thing we often mentioned in **Newsletters** was the question “who is the oldest native born male and female still living in **Pearland**.? We haven’t talked much about it since **Emma Wells** passed away. I believe **Emma** was somewhere in her **90’s** at the time of her death. I don’t think we have any native borns who are anywhere near that age. We have talked about this at our “**Old Codgers Coffee**” group from time to time. We seem to think the oldest native born male is **Sidney Kliesing** who will be **87 years old** on **April 28t** ;and the oldest female is **Carleen Nichols Mark**, who turned **86 on Feb. 7th**.

The **Kliesing** name is a prominent one in **Pearland** history. Most of our older members remember the days when the corner of **518 and 35** was the center of town and the **Raymond Kliesing Motor Company** stood one half a block away on the east side of **35**. **Sid** and his brothers **Charles and Donald** grew up working at their Dad’s **Chevrolet Agency**. Also a restaurant and dance hall were part of the same building. We have written many stories about the early days of **Pearland** when it was known for its dance halls and beer joints. The one in the **Kliesing** building was known as the “**Wander Tavern**” because a well known country western band called the “**Texas Wanderers**” often played for the dances there.

Sidney and Reba will have been married **67** years this **July 19th**. Their daughter, **Karen**, is **Secretary** of our **Historical Society** and son, **Ray**, is a member and active worker in the **Society**.



Sidney & Reba – 2015

As mentioned **Sidney and Carleen** are the two we decided were the oldest native born at the “**Old Codgers Coffee Group**.” Anyone have a different opinion.

We also believe that **Carleen Nichols Mark** is probably the oldest native born **Pearlander**. **Carleen** was born **Feb. 7th, 1931** to **Jimmy and Ida Davidson Nichols**. Her grandfather, **Charles Treat Davidson** started the first telephone exchange here in **Pearland**. As mentioned before **Charles Treat Davidson** had 9 children, six of whom were girls who all lived at some point in **Pearland**. The girls were **Gertrude Czolbe, Marie Davidson, Dora Long, Nell Garner, Ida Nichols and Zella Lane**. In **1985** there were 4 children of **Charles Davidson** living in **Pearland**, 10 grandchildren, 19 great grandchildren and 4 great, great grandchildren .

Carleen and I were married in **1952** and except for a brief time while I was in the **Army**, have lived in **Pearland** all of our almost 65 years of marriage.



Carleen on her birthday 2015

ATTENTION: HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS - - IMPORTANT CHANGE IN OCTOBER LUNCHEON REGISTRATION

This year registration for the luncheon will be as follows:

- 1. Fill out the registration form and send it to us with your check.**
- 2. We will put you on a registration list.**
- 3. When you arrive at the luncheon, simply have your name checked off the list.**

This procedure will eliminate the cost of mailing tickets and will simplify the check in process at the luncheon.

Please contact us with any questions. 281-485-8237. We’re looking forward to seeing you in October!

**Peggy Farthing Long
Treasurer**

Things to Keep in Mind

42.7 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot.

Remember, half the people you know are below average.

He who laughs last thinks slowest.

Depression is merely anger without enthusiasm.

Support bacteria. They're the only culture some people have.

A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.

When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

Everyone has a photographic memory. Some just don't have film.

How much deeper would the ocean be without sponges?

Eagles may soar, but weasels don't get sucked into jet engines.

Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what happened.

Life isn't like a box of chocolates ... it's more like a jar of jalapenos. What you do today, might burn your butt tomorrow.

Just remember -- if the world didn't suck, we would all fall off

Historical Society membership dues for the year 2017 became due Jan. 1st. Dues paid in the last quarter of 2016 cover your membership through 2017

Don't forget our regular quarterly Historical Society Meeting Thursday Night, April 20th at 7:00 P.M. at our Historical Society home on Galveston Ave. Cookies, coffee, cold drinks and visitation will follow the meeting. See you there.

RETURN THIS FORM TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE AT THE PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY "REUNION LUNCHEON" SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28th, 2017 AT THE PEARLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (OLD WALMART BUILDING ON HWY 35. PLEASE NOTE: PRICE IS NOW \$15 PER PERSON.

_____ Yes, count me in for a good time at the annual Historical Society Reunion Luncheon.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$_____ for luncheon tickets.

SPOUSE OR GUESTS NAMES: _____

PLEASE REMEMBER NO TICKETS WILL BE MAILED. WHEN YOUR FORM IS RECEIVED YOU AND YOUR GUESTS WILL BE PUT ON THE REGISTRATION LIST.

Membership Form – Pearland Historical Society

Date: _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$_____ covering membership dues of \$15 per person for the following persons for the year 2017. Is this a gift membership?

Yes _____ No _____

Name _____ **Name** _____

Mailing Address _____

e-mail address: _____ **Phone No** _____

Note: Dues paid in the last quarter of the year cover the following year. Mail to: Pearland Historical Society, P. O. Box 1333, Pearland, Texas 77588

Please note: If you are paying for gift memberships, please give the name and address of the person who is presenting the gift so we can notify the recipient.

Name _____ **Address:** _____

