

PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 23, Edition 1
January 2018

Editor: John D. "Mickey" Mark
E-mail: mark325@prodigy.net

Pearland Historical Society
P. O. Box 1333
Pearland, Texas 77588

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we start this new year, I would like to wish each of you readers a happy, prosperous and particularly a "healthy" **2018**. It is hard to believe we are nearing the end of this decade. We continue to lose **Historical Society** members and "old time" **Pearlanders** and as they pass on we certainly lose a lot of old time **Pearland** history. We often emphasize the importance of recording family histories. Further in this Newsletter is an interesting story written by **LaVerle Hill Spurgeon** of the history of the **Verrall Hill family in Pearland**. It is a very interesting story. We always welcome family history stories for the **Newsletter**.

Once again our **Historical Society Luncheon** was really well attended and everyone seemed to have a very good time. Our thanks go out to the **Pearland School District and to Keith Ordeneaux** for allowing us to use the school district facility for our annual luncheon. The facility is really nice and the janitorial service is a great help in setting up for the luncheon and cleaning up afterwards.

This year of course we will be honoring the **PHS graduating class of 1968** at our luncheon. I was fortunate to find a 1968 yearbook at our **Historical Society** home; and further in the **Newsletter** are some facts I find interesting about the class of 1968 and what was happening in 1968.

Don't forget our regular quarterly meeting coming up Thursday, **January 18th** at 7:00 P.M. As usual coffee, soft drinks, cookies and visitation follow the meeting. Hope to see you there.

Mickey Mark

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Kim Sinistore advises that the plaques for the plaques for the pears at Zychlinski have finally arrived and will be placed on the pears very shortly.

In previous **Newsletters** we have mentioned that **Horizan Montessori Charter Schools** had plans to buy the old complex on **Grand Blvd.** and to open a **Charter School** for grades one through eight. Their hopes were to open the school this past **Sept.** In **October** their representative reported that progress with the **City** has been slow but plans were to still open the school. We have been unable to get any further information so at this time it is not clear as to whether the **Charter School** will ever open. A lot of our members went to elementary school and then to high school at that complex and would like to see it continue to be a school.

AMONG OUR MEMBERS AND OLD TIME PEARLANDERS

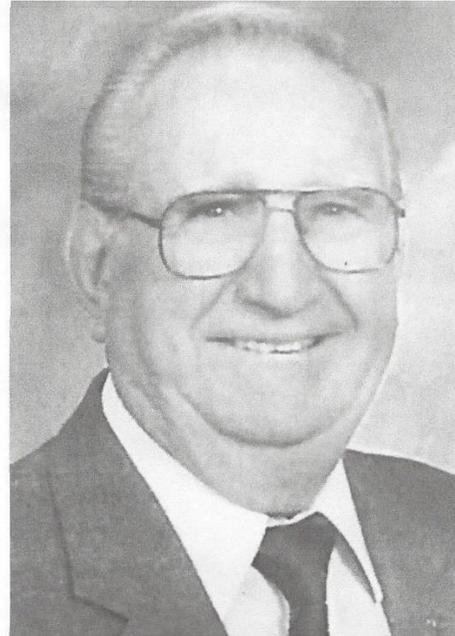
Society Member **Ina Kathryn "Ikie" Miller** passed away **Nov. 9th** from total organ failure. She had surgery to repair a heart aneurysm and aortic valve. She never regained consciousness and was removed from life support. She is survived by her uncle, **David L. Smith** and three cousins, **Martha Singleton, Susan Lenamon, and Leah Bateman**. **Ikie** was a **PHS grad of 1957**.



Ikie Miller with her Mother Mary Lee Smith Miller.

Society member **John "Little Boy" Cunningham** passed away peacefully at his home in **Palestine, Texas on Nov. 18th**. **Little Boy** is survived by his wife, **Leigh Cunningham**, daughter **Julie Cunningham** both of **Palestine** and by his son **John Chris Cunningham** of **New York, N.Y.** and his twin brother **First Vice President of our Historical Society, Luther "Big Boy" Cunningham**. Although **Little Boy** had not lived in **Pearland** for many years, his love for **Pearland** was obvious. He loved our **Reunion Luncheons**

and usually brought some interesting pictures of old **Pearland** with him to display at the luncheon. **John and Luther** were **1951** grads with **Luther** being the valedictorian and **John** the salutatorian. The "ice house" run by **Mrs. Thelma Cunningham** with a lot of help from **Big Boy and Little Boy** has a unique place in the history of our town



John "Little Boy" Cunningham

Long time **Pearland** dentist, **Dr. Glenn Garrison**, passed away **December 15th**. **Dr. Garrison** had served on the **Pearland School Board** and later after moving to **Sweeny, Tx.** was president of the **Sweeny School Board**. Although he moved his family to **Sweeny**, **Glenn** kept his dental practice here in **Pearland**.

1962 graduate, **Douglas Holmes**, passed away **December 29th**. **Doug** was living in **Richmond, Texas**. He was the son of **Pearland** teacher, **Mrs. Wilma Holmes**, who is one of the teacher pictured in the **1968 yearbook**.

Also around **December 29th** **Rhonda Eddings McIntyre** passed away. **Rhonda** was the daughter of **Odis and Gerri Cook**, **Rhonda** passed away after a battle with cancer. Her stepfather is **Bob Holton**

and her stepmother is **Joyce Eddings**. **Rhonda** was a **1978 PHS** grad.



L/R: Luther Cunningham, Corky Segelquist and John Cunningham at a PHS Luncheon

LOOKING BACK

Thinking about **Ikie Miller's** passing brought back memories of an interview I did with her **Mother, Mary Lee Smith Miller** for one of the early **Newsletters**. I started the **Newsletters** back in **June, 1994** and have copies of all the **Newsletters** from that date until the last issue in **October** last year. It is very interesting to go back and read what was happening in **Pearland** in those days and to read about some of the **Pearland pioneers** who were still with us at that time.

The **Smith family** came to **Pearland** in **1928** moving to a ranch off **Old Chocolate Road (now Cullen)**. At the time **Mary Lee** was a senior in high school, brother **Clarence** was a sophomore, sister **Joy (Joy Smith Miller)** was in the fifth grade and brother **David, Jr** was a two year old.

A couple of things **Mary Lee** mentioned in her memories of early **Pearland** days have stuck in my mind through the years. One was she recalled riding a horse into **Pearland** after a flood with water along **Old Chocolate Bayou Road** up to the belly of the horse. The second thing I remember

and have told so many times is that when she and her husband, **Jack**, moved into their new home on the corner of **North Austin and East Orange** in **1935** they were on the outer edge of **Pearland** and really out in the country. She recalled that from the **George Long** store (which stood on the site of **Central Barbecue**) there were no other houses in between them. Hard to even imagine today.

In the initial issue of the **Newsletter** in **June, 1994**, the feature story was about **Josie Frankenberger Heflin**, who was 96 at that time and was **Pearland's** oldest native born citizen. One thing which came out in the interview which is good I to have on record is the age of the old spreading oak tree which was in **Josie's** front yard at the time – right next to the **Pearland State Bank**. The tree is a landmark in **Pearland**. **Josie** said that when her father died in **1927** at the age of **95**, she planted the oak tree in his memory. So the tree is **90 or 91** years old. Most people would probably think it was older.



Josie Heflin (R.) with Bert and Emma Jamison

Another interesting bit of history which **Josie** recalled in the interview was that her father came to **Pearland** in **1895** and became postmaster shortly after the famous **1900** hurricane which killed around **8000** persons around the **Galveston, Gulf Coast** area. **Josie** recalled that her father was in **Galveston** at the time of the storm taking a test to become postmaster; and the family presumed he

was killed. However 3 days later he showed up back home after walking the railroad track all the way from **Galveston to Pearland**.

Josie was a remarkable lady with an amazing memory. Fortunately we gathered a lot of **Pearland** history in that interview.

One other interview from the old **Newsletters** I will mention is the story in the **July, 1996 Newsletter** about **Roy Martin, Jr. – “the Man Called Dude”**. **Dude** was the grandson of **Samuel Pleasant Martin**, one of **Pearland’s** founders and also famous for winning a city lot in **Pearland** for being designated as the most handsome man in **Pearland**. The genes certainly carried forward. **Dude** was a really handsome guy with very pretty children.

Dude told a very interesting story about growing up when **Pearland** was basically a farming community. What I always remember about that interview though was that when **WWII** started in **1941**, **Dude** was drafted into the **Navy** in spite of he and **Claudia** having 5 children. It is hard to believe. **Dude** recalled that shortly after he went into the **Navy a Yeoman** looked at his papers and said, “say, Mack, I see here you have five children. You can get out.” **Dude** replied, “oh yeah, how come they just put me in”; and so he had to stay in the **Navy**. During the war the ship **Dude** was assigned to was still in the shipyard in **Virginia** and he was part of a group of sailors who were assigned the duty of being background sailors for a movie **Stars and Spars with Janet Blair**. The movie was released about the time **Dude** was discharged and **Claudia** and the kids went to see it several times - - each time saying “**there’s Daddy.**”

Further in the **Newsletter** is a story about **Pearland** in 1968 and a little more about **Dude**.

In interviewing old time **Pearlanders** back in the mid nineties when asked what they did for recreation most replied they had ice cream socials, participated in church activities, etc.; but one thing nearly everyone mentioned was going to town team baseball games on Sunday afternoon at **Zychlinski**

Park and then later at the really nice baseball park **where** our **Historical Society** building now stands. **Luther Cunningham** recalled a story which **Lloyd Yost** once told him about one year when **Pearland** boasted that their “town team” could have beaten the **New York Yankees** who were world series champs. It seems that **Pearland** had beaten the **Sugar Land** prison team. **Sugar Land Prison** beat the **Huntsville Merchants** who beat the **Houston Buffs** in an exhibition game; and the **Buffs** then beat the **N.Y. Yankees** in a preseason exhibition game. This made the **Pearland Town Team** better than the **New York Yankees with Babe Ruth** and **Lou Gehrig**, etc.!!!



Dude Martin with sister Evelyn Martin Lawhon

More Early Pearland History

At our luncheon back in **October**, it was good to see **LaVerle Hill Spurgeon**. **LaVerle** had been going through some serious health issues; and it was great to see her at the luncheon. **LaVerle** mentioned that in previous issues of the Newsletter, we had asked for family histories. She presented me with a very interesting story of the **Verrall Hill**

family which she had written back in 2007. Thanks LaVerle.

THE HILL FAMILY IN PEARLAND

Mr. Willard Verrall Hill came to Pearland in late February or early March of 1938. Verrall's father, George J. Hill, who was a rice farmer living in Richmond, Texas told his son that the land in and around Pearland looked by good rice growing land so Verrall left his wife, Nina, and nearly two year daughter, LaVerle, at home in College Port, Texas and came to Pearland to build a house for them to live in while he farmed the land he had leased. While working on the one room home, he slept in his pick-up truck or on the ground and cooked his meals on an open fire. His Father came and helped him when he could. After about two weeks he had it fixed up enough to go get his family and move them in. We moved into the house on March 11, 1938. Shortly after that George J. Hill and his wife, Flora, and two sons, Sidney and Ralph, and a daughter Mary Kathryn, moved to Alvin, Texas. I don't know what year they moved to Pearland, into a farmhouse owned by George Long, but I do know that Mary Kathryn graduated from Pearland in High School in 1940. Later George and Flora moved into town. Granddad was a rice farmer, continuing to farm until a few years before his death at the age of 93. Grandma was housewife. They lived in Pearland until the times of their deaths and are buried in the South Park Cemetery.

Two years and one week after we moved to Pearland, George Daniel Hill was born to Verrall and Nina. By this time the little house had been moved to a spot just past Mrs. Elea Cates house, where her grandson, George Cates, lived with her. The little house had now grown to two rooms.

After George Cates joined the Navy in December, 1940, we moved into the house with Mrs. Cates, widow of Mr. Ben Cates, to help her. I remember sitting in front of the old battery powered radio and listening to Baby Snooks, Amos and Andy,

Henry Aldridge, etc. There was a Nashville station that played music; but we couldn't waste the battery because we had to listen to news of the war. There was no electricity out in the country at that time. I can remember the old windmill that pumped our water to drink and "Grandma Catesy" had a tank that held rain water for bathing, etc.

It was always a treat to go into the old Long's Grocery Store. I remember his old collie dog. I had my picture taken with her when I was very small. They tell me I used to go into the store when someone gave me a nickel and tell him, "I want this many worth of weinies." He would give me a couple of wieners and I would be happy. I had always rather have that than candy.

I can remember when the Pearland Baptist Mission started meeting in the Old Hotel building. I think every kid in Pearland would remember the big old Magnolia tree that we used to climb to the top of. I can't remember any of us ever falling out and getting hurt. Verrall and Nina were charter members of the First Baptist Church of Pearland. My grandmother, Mrs. Flora Hill, painted the first baptist picture. When the church rebuilt and they no longer needed it, Daddy gave it to us to use in the Antioch Baptist Church in Carthage, Texas.

Daddy was a rice farmer and Mama was a stay at home Mom until after George Daniel started to school. She went to work at the Pearland Drugstore and worked there 33 years until it closed in 1980. She served many a hamburger and milk shake to nearly every kid who ever went to Pearland School. They used to let us walk from the school to the drug store for lunch. Can you imagine that being done now? We always got back to class on time too. Mama said she had watched children grow up, have children and then has served their grandchildren on those stools. When the drugstore closed, she retired.

I started school at Pearland in 1941. By then we had moved into town and I could walk to school. When I was in the second grade the school burned

and we went to school in an old building on Highway 35 that had been known as the "Old Style Inn". It was a long low building facing the highway. I can't remember any traffic problems. It seems like I can remember water fountains outside. The teachers made school and we were able to go right on learning. Recess was always a fun time. We played "Annie Over" over the building. I don't know how we didn't disturb the classes going on inside. Also that was where I learned to Hop Scotch and play marbles. There was a grove of Honey Suckle growing out behind the building. I can still remember the sweet smell. When the new Elementary building was completed I got to go to school in a brand new building. I finished high school at Pearland in 1953. We had 14 in our graduating class. We were the last class to graduate from the old High School Building (Editor's Note: Now a Texas Historical Commission historic building)

After finishing school, I went to work in Houston but still lived in Pearland until I married William Earl Spurgeon in 1956. We moved to Almeda Plaza in the edge of Houston. Verrall and Nina continued to live in Pearland until June of 2002 when they moved to Carthage. On June 1, 2007 they celebrated their 73rd wedding anniversary.

There are so many happy memories of my life in Pearland, especially of my friends that I went to school with. An it is still so good to return to the Old Timers Luncheon and to see so many people that we haven't seen in at least a year; and some of them even longer. Of course I remember it as a little rice farming town and not as the city it has become. Even though the places I called home are no longer there, they are still

La Verle Hill Spurgeon -written in June 2007

(Editor's Note: Thanks, LaVerle for a very interesting story with a lot of Pearland History. The one thing which nearly every old timer will bring up is the old drugstore and eating a hamburger and milk shake for probably about a

quarter. I knew Nina worked there for many years but never realized it was 33. Others I remember working there were Carleen Nichols Mark, Louise Haskins Wisley Lydia "Cooter" Smith and Mrs. Joe Saffle. I am sure that over the 33 years which Nina worked there were many others.

The old magnolia tree LaVerle mentioned is still there. Our Historical Society investigated getting a Texas Historical Marker for the tree; but we found out they are not given for trees. Another funny story about the old tree which went around for years was that when Sunday School was out some of the kids would go out and play in the old tree when the preacher's sermon was going on. The story as I remember was that the minister (can't remember the name) told Joe David Saffle that he would give him a quarter to sit in church and listen to the sermon rather than go out make so much noise playing in the tree. Joe David agreed but after about 15 minutes of listening to the sermon, he walked up to the preacher and said, "here's your quarter back. I can't take any more." Can anyone verify that story?

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PEARLAND IN THE SIXTIES

As mentioned earlier in the **Newsletter** our **Historical Society** had a copy of the yearbook from the year **1968**, the class which will be honored at our annual **Reunion Luncheon**. Looking through the year book brings back a lot of memories of **Pearland** back in the sixties. I am not sure what the population of **Pearland** was back in **1968**; but in **1960** it was **1497** and in 1970 was **6444** so we took a pretty good spurt of growth in that decade. **NASA** came in, the **Houston Outerbelt and Highway 288** were completed; and after **1970** our population virtually exploded. Currently our population is **about 120,000**.

According to the yearbook there were **102** graduates in the class of **1968**. We will need some help in contacting the graduates to send them invitations to our luncheon. Last year we got a lot of help from **1967** graduate, **Mke Wade**. If any of you have addresses for **1968** grads we would certainly appreciate your sending them to us.

In **1968** we had one high school, one junior high school and two elementary schools. **Brookside Elementary** was the only school outside of **old Pearland**. Today we have four high schools, four junior high schools, four middle schools (5th & 6th grades); and eleven elementary schools.

Looking at teachers in the school district back in **1968** we see several teachers for whom schools have been named. **C. J. Harris** was principal of **Pearland Elementary** a school which now bears his name. **Herbert Carleston** was Jr. High Principal and has an elementary school named for him. **E. A. "Buster" Lawhon** was **Brookside Elementary Principal** a school which now bears his name. **Glenda Dawson** was a business education teacher in high school and was later a state representative. **Dawson High School** is named in her honor.



MRS. GLENDA DAWSON
Business Education

Glenda Dawson 1968

So it seems that the teacher corps in 1968 had some outstanding teachers to have so many schools named in their honor. **Sam Jamison**, who had been a bus driver since the 40's was a maintenance operator in 1968 and of course **Jamison School** is named in his honor.

Brazoria County queen candidate and escort were **Shirley Lejsal** and **Jimmy Sanders**. **Mr and Miss. PHS** were **Jimmy Sanders** and **Linda Raney**. **Homecoming queen** was **Shirley Lejsal**. **Best All Around seniors** were **Mike Wellman** and **Vicki McWhirter**.

The **Oiler football** team had a pretty good year winning 7 and losing 3. Head coach was **Bob Howard** who just recently passed away. **All district** players were **Steven Prensner**, **quarterback**, **Robert Rowe**, **fullback**, **Terry Knight**, **defensive tackle**, **Craig Wilburn**, and **Mark McQuillar**, **defensive back**.

The girls basketball team had a good year advancing to the regional finals before losing to **Gregory-Portland**. Coach was **Miss Carolyn Miller**. Society member **Margene Johnston Stack**, was a three year letterman junior on the team.

Superintendent was **Mr. Steven Prensner**. Serving on the board of trustees at that time were **J. E. Best**, **Dr. W.C. Adams**, **H. L. Friedrich**, **Gene Van Eman**, **Dr. Fred Cessac**, **H. D. "Buck" Johnston**.

Previously we had mentioned we would be writing more about **Roy "Dude" Martin**. We mentioned **Dude** was a really handsome guy and all of his children were very good looking also. One of the teachers in the year **1968** was a really good looking young man named **Roy Martin III** known to everyone in **Pearland** as **"Buddy"**. **Buddy** taught **Math** for two years. He then served his country in **Vietnam** for two years and later graduated from the **University of Houston School of Law**. He practiced law in a private law firm for a short time and then joined the **City Attorney's** staff for the **City of Houston**. Then in **1987** **Buddy** died from

cancer and **Pearland** lost one its most outstanding young men.



Roy F. Martin III (Buddy) 1968 yearbook

HELP, PLEASE

Our **Historical Society** is in real need of help. We will soon be having an election of officers; and we critically need some younger persons to take the place of me, **John D “Mickey” Mark, President; Luther Cunningham, 1st Vice-President and Peggy Farthing Long, Treasurer.**

We are all three in our eighties and have been in our current positions for quite a number of years. In my case since **1995**. We will be electing officers at our **June** meeting. Please consider volunteering to take over in one of the positions mentioned. **Peggy** has done a wonderful job as **Treasurer of the Society** and has kept our financial records in great order as well as maintaining our membership list, mailing addresses, e-mail addresses etc. and **Luther** has been right there to work hard for whatever the **Society** needed. Our sincere thanks go out to both **Peggy and Luther**. Please think about either yourself or someone you feel would be a really good officer and we will discuss it at our next meeting. Thanks

Mickey Mark

Historical Society membership dues for the year 2018 became due on January 1st. Dues paid in the last quarter of 2017 cover dues through 2018.

Don't forget our regular quarterly Historical Society meeting Thursday night, Jan. 18th 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.

Worth Repeating

“Always laugh when you can. It is cheap medicine.” Lord Byron

“If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.” Derek Bok

“The only way to have a friend is to be one “
Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Rest satisfied with doing well, and leave others to talk of you as they please.” Pythagoras

“The secret to making one's self tiresome is not to know when to stop.” Francois Voltaire

PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY Membership Application

Date _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ covering membership du of \$15 per person for the following persons for the year 2018

Name _____ **Name** _____

Mailing Address _____

e-mail address _____

Phone Number _____

Note: Dues paid in the last quarter of the year cover the following year.

Mail to: Pearland Historical Society, P.O. Bo 1333, Pearland, Texas 77588

