President’s Message
September, 2020

September normally starts our monthly meetings of the shell club, but the pandemic has seen fit to take that away from us at this point. I did hear on the news the other night that the number of virus cases in Houston is dropping and our overall percentage numbers are much improved. Of course, that may change after Labor Day as people celebrate the end of summer and start settling back into their normal household routines once again. It has been a long summer filled with going to the grocery store once or twice a week, an occasional trip to Lowe’s for supplies for our household projects we have been working on, or maybe even a trip to pick up take-out foods at your favorite restaurants. If you are like me, these types of activities have been the extent of your travels these last few months.

I don’t know about you, but I am looking forward to 2021 even though most of the shell shows in Florida have been cancelled for January-March. 2021 has to be better than this past year for all of us. COA 2021 is back on the drawing board and scheduled for early June in Melbourne, Florida once again if the virus cooperates and leaves Florida. The Jamboree has been pushed back into October and will be held in conjunction with the Sea-shell Searchers Shell Show. Everyone I have talked to really likes the fact they will be able to attend both events on the same weekend. I have rescheduled our annual club luncheon at Monument Inn for late May, and hopefully after Christmas, we can start our club meetings again.

All of these activities are dependent upon the status of the pandemic, which will be monitored by the Board on a regular basis. Hopefully, we will have an effective vaccine for COVID-19 later this year or early 2021. If so, many of these things can return to our normal club activities. Safety of our club members is JOB ONE. Too many Americans lost their lives to this pandemic and we don’t want any of our members to join that list. I would love to see every one of you but that just isn’t in the cards at this point. So, let’s all stay positive and hope for better times in 2021. Hope is a good thing and a great motivator. In the meantime, we will try to keep you informed of what is happening around the shelling world in our monthly newsletter. If you hear something you can share with our members, please contact Lucy Clampit so she can capture it in the newsletter. Continue to stay safe and healthy and work on your shell collections.

2020-21 Election of Officers

A big thank you to the members who voted. Congratulations to the newly elected officers:

President – Dave Green,
Vice President – Cheryl Hood,
Treasurer – Angie Haneiko,
Recording Secretary – Rusti Stover,
Corresponding Secretary – Lucy Clampit.
President:  
David Green

Vice President:  
Cheryl Hood

Treasurer:  
Angie Haneiko

Recording Secretary:  
Rusti Stover

Corresponding Secretary:  
Lucy Clampit

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There was no meeting in May—No Minutes.

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Sharing Stories

Since we are unable to meet in person, the editor would like to share your shelly stories in the newsletter. Perhaps you could tell us about your first shell, your favorite shell or your favorite shell family. You could write a few paragraphs about a collecting trip or other shelling adventure. How did you come to join HCS? Do you have a favorite HCS experience? If you are unsure about your topic, feel free to email me (lclampit@comcast.net) with your idea. This will allow us to stay connected and learn more about each other until we can begin in-person meetings again.

The editor will share her first shell and how she found HCS in an article. Lisa Alderman shared her trip to Murdochs in another article, and Darwin Alder shared his latest beach trip.

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How a Shell Addiction Began

By Lucy Clampit

I grew up in the forests, farms and swamplands of North Louisiana. (Yes, I am a Louisiana Yankee.) My brothers were both very interested in nature and science. One even had a few seashells. I had zero interest in any of it. I just wanted to get out of there.

In June 1969, Jerry and I moved to Houston. We both liked to fish, so in July 1971, we were on the beach a little east of Surfside. While he was fishing, I was walking along the beach and found a mysterious object. It was ALIVE! I had no idea that seashells were made by an animal! A trip to the library provided me with a couple of books to help solve the mystery. The snail was a small Busycon contrarium (Conrad 1840). (The name has changed a few times since then.)

Later that summer, a radio station informed us that there was going to be a shell show at Sharpstown Mall. We went, found out about HCS, and, as they say, the rest is history.

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2020-21 Membership Dues

Thanks to everyone who has renewed their membership. Those who have not paid will receive an email reminder with a form attached, or a form will be included in your paper copy of the newsletter.

Through the years, the price of paper, ink, stamps, etc. has increased considerably. Since most members now read the newsletter on the HCS website, we have not had to increase dues, but it is costing the club money to mail paper copies. If you wish to receive paper copies, you will need to add $5.00 to your dues.
Murdochs
By Lisa Alderman

After John Haneiko's presentation at our last meeting, "Murdochs in Galveston" has been on my list of places to visit. Last Saturday (August 29th) when my boyfriend, Wes mentioned he needed to run an errand in Galveston, I jumped at the chance to tag along! Murdochs did not disappoint (see photo)! There are two stores, side by side, and the shell selection was different at each. They had a nice selection of corals too. It was also fun to browse the vacation souvenirs. Galveston was very busy that day! Suppose everyone was out and thankful that Laura decided not to visit. We stopped at Beach Access 11, I think, to stroll the beach a bit, but didn't find anything interesting. As we drove along the island to San Luis Pass, the beach was lined with pop-up canopies the entire way. Will definitely have to make another trip when we have more time to spend on the beach.

Beach Trip
By Darwin Alder

In early August, my cousin April and I went to the beach at Matagorda. It was the first time this year that I have visited a beach in Texas. It was a nice summer day. As we got there, we ate our lunch and started to walk to the jetties at the mouth of the Colorado river. We walked to the end of one of the jetties. There was a man fishing and a few boats going in and out of the channel. I looked to where the boats were and saw a large object. I thought someone from the boat threw something in the water. To our wonder and great astonishment, we saw that it was porpoises that were breaching! We saw at least ten separate episodes. It was the first time in all my years in Texas that I had ever seen that happen! It was awesome. We saw a man catch a large speckled trout which was fun. I told April we probably would not see any shells. To my enjoyment and delight we found an *Epitonium angulatum*. It was all by itself. So, we saw porpoises hermit crabs and an *angulatum*.

April brought her mermaid tail and was probably the first mermaid ever in Matagorda!

We finished the trip at Surfside. The worm goop was there with only *epitonium* fragments. It was getting late, and we headed back to Houston. The finale to a glorious day was a peacock near Brazoria on Highway 36.

It was truly a wonderful and awesome day!
Changes to *The Epitonium* and Web Site

FYI: We will no longer be including phone numbers and email addresses in the newsletter or on the web site. The editor’s email will be the only one. We value the privacy of our members and do not want outsiders to be able to obtain private information from the site. Since the old newsletters contained that type of information, they have been deleted from the web. We will resume putting newsletters, minus the two items, on-line, so people can learn more about the club. If you need a back issue, contact Lucy.

HCS Web Site

*In early August, the editor and webmaster were thrilled to receive the following email:*

“Hi folks,

I hope it’s okay to reach out like this but we wanted to send the Houston Conchology Society some virtual applause lol. We needed information on shells so your photos and recommendations here are awesome: [https://www.houstonshellclub.com/links.htm](https://www.houstonshellclub.com/links.htm)

Sadly our STEMettes are unable to meet in person due to the pandemic and I know the kiddos are pretty bored being stuck inside. This summer we've been (virtually) discussing the classification of living things like trees, flowers, insects, & even birds! We've been keeping our own journals for observations too which is super fun. One of our members Hailey (11) had the idea that we should talk about the identifying sea shells next- she collects them so she's our resident expert! Your list of resources there gave us some good info to get started so we wanted to reach out and say thanks, it's very cool to connect with Conchologists :).

I asked the gang if they had any questions or favorites to share and Hailey put forward this shell collecting guide that has a lot of tips for identification: [https://www.highrises.com/collecting-seashells-in-florida.php](https://www.highrises.com/collecting-seashells-in-florida.php)

She thought you would like it too. We also thought it could be a good contribution to your resource list there, would you consider adding it for us? I’d love to show everyone at our Zoom meeting this week so they can see what a superstar she is! If you have any other recommendations feel free to share but only if it’s no trouble.

Thanks again to the HCS family for entertaining us all during these rough times. Take care!

Roger Jarvis and the STEMettes”

(Editor’s comments: Mr. Jarvis works with the Friends of Bay Minette. Bay Minette is a small town, primarily a farm and timber community, northeast of Mobile, Alabama and not far from the Florida border. Part of the organization’s mission...”is to step up as the protector of Bay Minette’s nature and give a voice to those who can’t be heard...” The web link that the young lady found is from the web site of a real estate company that specializes in high-rise condos. Many of the articles involve Florida shelling, but it is a good resource for shell information, so we have added it to the HCS web site.)
Shell Collecting in a Pandemic
By Dave Green

Even in a pandemic, shell collecting continues to keep our interest in conchology and malacology strong and active. Needless to say, COVID-19 has certainly made drastic changes in our daily lives and activities, not to mention places we go and people we visit and talk shells with. Even with the pandemic raging out of control in many states, we can still talk shells, and collecting shells with our friends and fellow collectors through emails, phone calls, and on social media. It is not as easy as sitting across from someone and discussing a particular species, or talking about a particular collecting trip, but that is what we are forced to do in these difficult times. The pandemic here in Texas is hitting us very hard, as it is in other states such as Florida, Arizona, California, and all across the United States. Hopefully, we are practicing what we have been advised to do: wash our hands regularly and often, practice social distancing and wear a mask. If you are not doing these things, please change immediately. I have even had a couple of my dear friends recommend that once the pandemic is over, I should continue to wear my face mask. They told me I look much better!!!!!! I took no offense.

So, what do you do during these down times to keep your interest in shells and collecting going? Do you work on your collections on a daily basis, or just whenever the urge hits you? Although I am retired from the Petroleum industry, the pandemic has presented me with the opportunity to do things with my shell collection that I always wanted to do but never had time to complete due to my professional career. Needless to say, I would certainly rather do these projects without the pandemic looking over my shoulder, but it is a reflection of the times and just reality at this point. One of the bright spots regarding the pandemic, it has forced most of us to stay home and find projects to occupy our time and keep us running in a positive mode.

I would like to share with you some of the activities and projects regarding my shell collection that have consumed my time and efforts while making my collection more presentable to guests visiting my home (whenever that happens again), identifying shells that I meant to identify months and years ago, clean and refurbish many of my shells, put shells into plastic boxes and other display containers, and lastly, time to make decision on which shells I want to keep in my collection as I start a process of downsizing my collection.

Since I turn 75 years of age next month, I know it is time to face reality and make decisions on which shells or families are the most important to me going forward. This can, and often is, a very hard task to do effectively. If you are like me, I often catch myself going backward in this process and pulling out specimens that I had determined to sell or donate and going back to put them back in the collection. This is a normal feeling but it can be much like a case of cancer, especially if you have been collecting shells most of your life and you hate to give it up. So, don’t think you are alone in this issue. I, too, suffer from this controversy and indecision at times. If you have these issues, here is my suggestion on how to overcome this problem: Think through what your goals are before you begin your downsizing and stay committed to those goals throughout the downsizing exercise.

The Pandemic has also forced me to spend time just going through each shell cabinet and look-
ing at all the shells I have collected or purchased over all these years. WOW…….. I have been surprised so many times. I had forgotten I even had one of those shells, much less where it was located. It has forced me, although it wasn't hard, to refresh my memory and examine my entire collection for the first time in many years. Needless to say, I have had a wonderful time just examining and looking at parts of my collection that are often ignored and forgotten.

I purchase shells on eBay from several dealers at different times. During the pandemic, I find myself on line on eBay and WORMS, or just looking at material on shells, or collecting locations which occupy a large percentage of my time.

I also find that the pandemic has presented me the opportunity to spend more time reading and looking at all the shell books in my library. I have over 600 shell books total, going back to my early days of collecting and getting started in shell collecting, plus a huge library of more recent published shell books on shell families and collecting locations. It always seemed I never had time to read my books in detail. Certainly, my professional career and my family occupied the majority of my time and I just could never find time to concentrate on my library. I know I have spent a fortune on books over the years, and now I am finding time for each and every one. I have set up a daily schedule where I set aside 1-2 hours a day to just read and review the books in my library. I have been amazed at the knowledge I have picked up in this routine, not to mention looking at beautiful shells, many of which I will never own due to cost. It is exciting to sit down, relax, and review one of your books. Maybe a good glass of wine, some soft listening music while you read makes for an enjoyable time. It also refreshes your knowledge base regarding conchology and malacology. Overall, it just makes you feel better……maybe it is the glass of good wine!!

Over the past few years, I have purchased several large collections of shells from long time friends that made the decision to get out of shelling all together, or had medical issues which were life threatening and they needed to resolve the issue of what to do with their collections. My garage is a warehouse of boxes filled with shells of all kinds from these collections. As a result of the pandemic and retirement, I have a considerable amount of time to review the con-
tents of many of these boxes and also organize my garage by labeling many of these boxes. It has made life so much easier going into the garage to look for a particular family of shells. This is just one example of a project that has been accomplished due to the pandemic, and also retirement. I just needed to get motivated and I needed time to get all the work completed.

The pandemic has been a disaster for our country and the entire world, and it continues to spread worldwide, especially in the United States. I watch the newscast on television daily to keep up with the number of case and the death rate to just remind myself how serious this pandemic really is to each of us, and the need to be safe and free of the virus. If you are like me, my only trips outside my home are to the grocery store and to keep doctor appointments. I have not been out to a restaurant in many, many weeks and there is none on the horizon. We have ordered take out on a few occasions but we primarily prepare our meals in our own kitchen and just stay home.

My shell collection, my shell books, and many different projects on my collection have made life more bearable during these past months of captivity. It has made me appreciate the shells I have in my collection, given me time to work on my collection, to read and advance my knowledge of shells and provide me with projects to occupy my time and take my mind off the reality of the world around me. There will come a day when we can all go back to our shell shows, shell club meetings, special events and other activities to spend time with our long-time friends and fellow collectors. In the meantime, we just need to be safe and practice our distancing and wear our masks. I hope this article will motivate you to spend time with your collection and plan for the future, plus look forward to good times again.

There is so much you can do with a shell collection. Several individuals I communicate with have multiple exhibits already completed for display in shell shows next year, or whenever we resume our normal shelling lifestyle. Take this down time as an opportunity to invest time in your interest in your collections or to renew your interest in shell collecting. There will come a time when we can walk on beaches early in the morning to see what the tide has deposited on the beach for us, or time to go to some beautiful and favorite location to snorkel or scuba dive and look for shells. All of this will pass with time, so capture the moment and use it wisely. But, most important, be safe and practice the guidelines our public officials are recommending. We do not need to lose more of our friends and fellow shell collectors to this pandemic.

(This article originally appeared in Summer 2020 edition of the Sarasota Shell Club newsletter The Beautii.)