

Shell and Tell

The newsletter of the Gulf Coast Shell Club



*Argopecten irradians
concentricus* (Say, 1822)

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President
Phyllis Bernard

Linda said it was time for another newsletter. Feels like I just did one. I would like to thank Jim and Linda Brunner and Scot and Kathy Dilbeck for taking over the shell show. Along with them getting organized we need to be thinking about what our displays will be. It is never too early to start working on them, also it not too early to think about where you would like to help with the shell show.

As always find that day or maybe just hour here or there and go and enjoy the beach. Take care and we will see you at the next meeting.

Phyllis

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Welcome our new members!

Judson Griffies
John Jacobs
Janis Laycock
Denise Kimball



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Vice President - Dave Clausen
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THE TRAVAILS OF A SHELL AUCTIONEER

by Jim Brunner

As you know, for many years I have served as an auctioneer at COA Conventions and during our club activities. Some of you have remarked on my seeming vast store of knowledge about the shells that are presented. I'm here to tell you that is all a sham. With over 200,000 known species of marine mollusks it is virtually impossible to know them all (or even a significant fraction). So here is the truth about an auction and the problems it presents as seen from the auctioneer's point of view.

Problem 1: EXPERTISE. Each of us wear's many hats as we go through life: child, parent, friend, worker. We are constantly changing hats, often many times a day. And each time we change we take on a new role, each with an assumed ability to meet the demands the role creates. When an auctioneer begins his sale, everyone in the room is assuming that everything has been checked out: Is the shell correctly identified, if it has flaws, have they been mentioned, is the collection location correct, and has it been appropriately priced? A dealer might be able to do this off the top of his head. Not so for us commoners and it's a heavy burden to carry.

Problem 2: RESEARCH. As mentioned above we wear many hats. Most of the ones I wear are tiny little things and don't carry a lot of responsibility - except when I put on the **Auctioneer's Hat**. Then I have to be the expert. How do I do that?

My only requirement for agreeing to do a COA Auction is that I receive a complete list of the items to be sold at least 30 days in advance of the event. This gives time for research, research, research. For years I have prepared an "Auctioneer's Book" that contains a page for each item. On each page are: The lot number and for shells:

Family, genus & species, author, collection location, size in millimeters, normal adult size range, world record size (if known), the Fair Market Value, how much to ask for the opening bid and how much each step increase will be. Plus, any notes of interest. This last might include any interesting aspect of the shell: unusual size or conformation, exotic location or habitat, who or where it was named for, etc. I've always regarded the auction not just as a money raiser but as a chance to educate about the greater joy of shells. (If you know it's special in some way, you'll spend more.)

Wow, that's a lot of stuff. Let's unpack it a little.

Family, genus & species, author: Each shell must be checked to insure you are using the correct current name (often a moving target). Also, if you have the shell available, you need to verify the identification. For the first part I use the online data base World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS). For the second I favor Eddie Hardy's Gastropods.com which gives pictorial variation within a species.

Collection Location: WoRMS generally has locality data near the bottom of each individual species page. While this seems minor, the location given on the data tag must be one in which the shell is actually found. It's surprising how often this problem pops up.

Sizes: These numbers are important. Knowing the size of what you are selling doesn't mean much unless you have something to compare it to such as the normal size range or the world record. The former can be found at Gastropods.com. The latter is more of a problem. The last listing of these sizes was in 2007. Since that time the list has been privately held and is difficult to access. Basically, this means you may not have the latest size (although many old records still stand and can serve as a valid comparison for the auction's purposes).

Fair Market Value (FMV): This used to be so easy. For 23 years Tom Rice prepared a new edition of "Rice's Prices" which listed dealer's prices for shells by location, size, and condition. Getting a FMV was merely a matter of turning a few pages. Unfortunately, Tom published the last edition in 2007, packed it up, and moved to Phuket, Thailand. Finding a FMV today means looking at every list that is

on line (a couple of good ones are Conchology.be and australianshells.com). This is now the most time consuming part of the entire process.

Opening Bid & Step Increases: The auctioneer is not going to tell you the FMV but will use it to set these numbers.

Problem 3: The Auction Itself. Some have equated this to herding cats and sometimes it seems like that. The people in the room are there for a wide variety of different reasons. Many are there to buy specific shells for their collection. Others want to add almost anything they can get. Some are looking for bargains - and generally they are there to be had. Dealers attend the auction to bid for rare or unusual items or to act as a buyer for someone else. But the truth is that the vast majority of the people in the room will never raise their bid paddle. They are there for the excitement, for the entertainment, or out of curiosity. A successful auction is one that gets this group involved. How the heck do you do that?

We're going to have to crawl into the weeds to find that answer.

The first question is for whom is the auction conducted?

Traditionally, we say it is to fund the COA Research Grants Program and we have to raise \$20,000 for that purpose. Actually, the general fund of COA could fulfill any shortfall from the auction for a long time. So, it's only "kinda" for research grants.

Maybe it's for the dealers? Actually, the dealers are here for their yearly "in-the-room" swap fest with other dealers (and some buyers) and for the bourse. The auction is, at best, an interesting side event.

How about the high rollers? These are the folks who have large collections and have almost all the shells offered in the auction. They don't really need the auction except to fill in that rare gap.

Who does that leave? The general membership of course; those with smaller collections and (perhaps) limited means. To my mind this is the group that the auction should be structured toward.

Lofty goal! How are you going to pull that off?

My ideal auction would have all the "wow" shells but it would also have a scattering of hard to get but inexpensive shells - the kind that could open for \$2.00 and go by \$2.00 increments. I would put two of them in the first ten lots, another four in the next forty, and a few in the second half of the auction. "But we aren't going to make any money!". Actually, the opposite is true. We've done this a few times before. What happens is everybody bids and the item sells for much more than its FMV. (Aha; forgot what that means? Go back a page). And once they have learned that that bidding paddle isn't all that heavy, they are more likely to bid on the more expensive items.

The bottom line: A COA auction should be fun, filled with humor and genial competition. Cheer for that first three figure sale and really cheer if we get a four figure one. Decorum be darned, we ain't Sothebys!

But there is a good side to all of this and that is the view from the podium. From there you see all the interplay that takes place. The wife giving a silent nod to the husband who wants to raise the bid. The locked elbows of determined bidders (we love to see those as we can bounce back and forth rapidly on bids). The stern looks exchanged by dealers bidding on the same item. And the pure joy on the face of someone who has just won their first ever auction shell. As Tucker Abbott told me a long time ago "Sometimes our hobby is more about the people than shells". That is what the auctioneer sees that makes the work all worth while.



Jim (minus his lucky brown shell shirt) does his final COA auction.



Jim's sometime "partner in crime", Paul Callomon, doing his part in the auction in the name of education grants.



Steven Coker making sure the auctioneer sees his card and takes his bid. As long as his number is up the auctioneer can go back and forth between him and others bidders raising the amount each time.

Beside Steven is Karlynn Morgan. In the foreground are Dan Minor and Mark Johnson.

**GULF COAST SHELL CLUB
2024 PROGRAMS AND REFRESHMENTS**

or
Ways to expand your mind and waistline simultaneously!

MONTH	PROGRAM	REFRESHMENTS
July	Picnic, June 20th No regular meeting	You, see below
August	TBA	Open?
September	Open Meeting on the 2nd WEDNESDAY	Open

2024 Picnic at the Bay!

It is that time of the year again....we will meet at Luke's for barbeque, great food, fellowship and work! The club will furnish the barbeque and we will each bring a side dish. Luke will furnish the shells and hoses, buckets, water, soap, etc. and we will furnish the labor. If you have delicate skin bring your own gloves. Wear old clothes. It will probably be hot so dress accordingly. When we get the shells cleaned we will eat.

These shells have been donated and will be used for the club booth at the show as well as the children's activities and Scavenger Hunt. This is a team effort. The cleaning starts at 9-9:30 AM CDT on July 20, 2024. Luke's address is: 4212 Cape San Blas Rd.

Port St Joe FL

Phone: 334-701-6191

If lost call Luke at the above number or someone else you know is there for directions or rescue.

Bring anything you think you might need, sunscreen, insect repellent, change of clothes if you are accident prone, band-aids (if you are really, really accident prone), gloves, brushes and hat.

Janis Laycock will order and pick up the meat. Side dishes needed are listed below. Send what you are bringing to Linda Brunner at: jili1043@comcast.net She will remind everyone of what is needed as we go along.

Needed:

bread

drinks

ice

side dishes such as slaw, baked beans, potato salad, etc.

other salads

fruit

desserts

COA 2024

Photos by Linda Brunner and Brant Holman

Despite multiple member losses this year COA went on and everyone pulled together to put on a grand event! Sixteen members of the Gulf Coast Shell Club were on hand to participate. The programs ran at a moderate pace with time for everyone to interact before, during and after presentations. The raffle had great items and our own Kathy Brewton came home a winner with a beautiful canister set made in Sanibel. Door prizes were awarded before each session. There were two silent auctions. One was for shells, etc., and the other for books and other printed material. There was an oral auction with our own Jim Brunner and Paul Callomom acting as auctioneers. The oral auction had a one hour preview and then, as items came up for bid, Jerry Clampit ran a PowerPoint with the item on the screen. Jerry also was the audio visual chair for all of the programs during the week. Then there was the **BOURSE!** There are no words sufficient to describe the Bourse. It has to be experienced. Suffice it to say that it is an expansive worldwide shell market with shells and shell related items.

Another highlight was the Welcome Party. This year's theme was "Shell-Olympics" and attendees were encouraged to participate as Olympic competitors or represent other related images. There were Tennis players, golfers, fencing costumes, equestrians, a gold, silver and bronze costume representing all medals, Nike (the Winged Goddess of Victory) and the Mistress of Ceremony, Anne Joffe.

The final formal gathering was the Banquet where we had a relaxed meal, Kevan Sunderland presented a program involving shells and ships, the Neptunea Awards were presented and a Lifetime Achievement Award to Anne Joffe. Then the raffle winners were announced. It was one of the better conventions where we were all busy learning and relaxing, spending time with old friends and making new friends.

Next year's convention will be in Corpus Christi, Texas. Since it will be in Texas I am sure it will be BIG! Mark you calendar for July 7-12, 2025, and start saving your pennies for a great time!



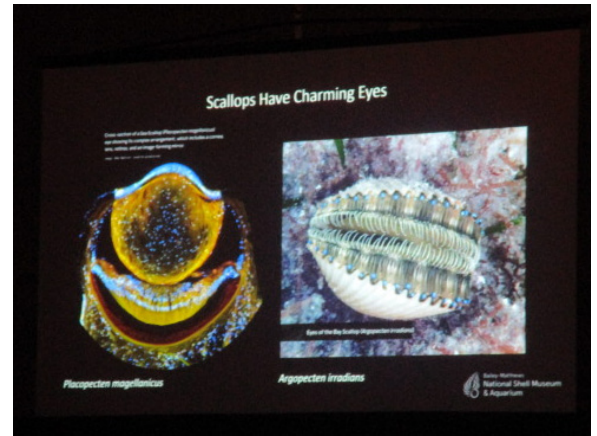
Member Karlynn Morgan as Nike wearing her Gold Medal.



Gold medalists with Anne Joffe on the right. Notice that two of the winners are GCSC members, Karlynn and Lisa Price, the equestrian.



COA is a family affair!



Scallop eyes and more from one of our programs.



Even more medalists.



Kathy and Phyllis Gray at the banquet.



This is what relaxed looks like!

Clever banquet centerpiece.



There's more





Variety at the bourse.



These scallops would make me happy too!



Don Dan and Brant's friend Robert.



Bev Dolezal with a huge triton. Hint, it is a beautiful fake.



Dave and Linda Green waiting for more buyers.



Tom Ball guarding .



And your choice is?



I see some large volutes!



When the first rush starts there is standing room only. Then it clears and you can do some serious shopping and take pictures!



I'm getting ready for 2025!
Will the goat* be there?



Yes,
there
are
land
snails.

The sun has set on COA 2024
but will rise again in Corpus
Christi 2025!



* The goat was all over Galveston. I am wondering if it is really a Texas goat that is touring the state.

* * * * *

Birthday Shells

May



Juno Volute

Scaphella junonia (Lamarck, 1804)

People born under this shell are warm, determined and secure.

July



Lion's Paw

Nodipecten fragosus (Conrad, 1849)

When you are born under this shell you are believed to be energetic, protective and cautious.

June



The Conch Shell

This is a problem. As shellers we study all aspects of shells whether marine, land, or fresh-water. Conch appears in the common name of conchs and not conchs. For example: The Florida Horse Conch is not a conch! It belongs to the family Fasciolaridae which is a group of shells called spindle shells. A true conch belongs to the family Strombidae and is characterized by the stromboid notch, thus the dilemma. The birthday material says the Conch Shell but pictures a Horse Conch which is not a true conch but we will go with it. So, we will picture the our state shell *Triplofusus giganteus* (Kiener, 1840), The Florida Horse Conch.

Those born under this shell are said to be verbose, cunning, lively and inquisitive.

There's a Shell Show Coming and it is Ours!
It is our Silver Anniversary!

The first meeting of those interested in helping with our shell show gave us a good working base with many volunteers. At the second meeting a list of chairpersons was formalized. Below are is a list of those chairpersons and needed chairpersons.. A big thank you to all who attended both of our meetings and for their ideas and help.*

- A. Show Chairpersons: Kathy & Scott Dilbeck, Linda & Jim Brunner
- B. Forms and Paperwork: Kathy Dilbeck & Linda Brunner
- C. Scientific Division: Linda Brunner
- D. Artistic Division: Leanne Shell
- E. Physical Setup: Jim Brunner
- F. Name Tags: Janis Laycock
- G. Judges: Scott Dilbeck & Jim Brunner
- H. Plaques and Ribbons: DJ Moore & Jim Brunner
- I. Entry Booth: DJ Moore, Charyl Dyslin, Al Johnson
- J. Club Booth: Luke Cooley and Kathy Brewton
- K. **Publicity: Position vacant**
- L. Hospitality Committee: Phyllis Bernard
- M. Banquet: Kathleen O'Brien
- N. **Children's Area: Position Vacant**
- O. Treasurer: Jim Brunner

***Red** areas mean we need volunteers or a group who will share in filling these vacancies. This is our Silver Anniversary and it should be our best show ever, especially after we have practiced for 24 years!

Needed: Location of left over undated rack cards
 Markers for children's area
 Activity/color sheets for children's area
 Crayons
 Small shells for aquarium
 Raffle items