

# 50 Years and Counting:

A History of the  
Sarasota Shell Club



*Siratus beaultii*

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# Fifty Years and Counting

## Founding and First Meetings

The Sarasota Shell Club was founded in 1963 reflecting the interest and inspiration of Jack and Helen Oberle. The first meeting was held March 28 at the Palmer Bank Building. Fifteen people became members at the first meeting upon payment of dues which were set at \$1.00 (although a footnote to the minutes clarifies that this amount was for 6 months).



The first order of business was the election of officers. As might be expected, Jack Oberle was elected President. In addition, John Stone was chosen as Treasurer and Winifred Leonard was selected as Secretary.

The minutes of the initial meeting also note discussion of a name for the Club. No indication is given of what names were considered, only that the group determined to call themselves the Sarasota Shell Club. This designation, accurate although not flashy, has served its descriptive purpose well and has stood the test of time.

At the second meeting, held April 12 in a private home, there was discussion of by-laws and a constitution. The minutes indicate that at this meeting, shells were displayed by two members and “lovely refreshments” were served. Five additional persons became members upon payment of dues.

The third meeting was held April 25. During this meeting there was consideration of a field trip; the plan was to hire a boat to reach “some islands” off-shore from Venice. It was also decided not to hold summer meetings and that official gatherings would resume in September. [The matter of summer meetings was revisited in May 1966, with a decision to hold such events. “After this, the first of the summer meetings, the following forecast may be made, that these gatherings will not only be enjoyed by the membership but will serve a very real purpose in keeping the interest up during the warm summer months and so preventing any letdown or loss of contact among local members” (Minutes of May 12, 1966).]

The minutes of the first fall meeting, in September 1963, reported the initial reading of a constitution and by-laws (a document which was reread, discussed, and approved at the October meeting). In addition, the Treasurer resigned and Helen Oberle was elected to that office. Finally, after a “long discussion” it was decided to hold future meetings in the evening (rather than in the afternoon as had been the practice).

The December 1963 minutes indicated approval for providing a “membership card” and a copy of the constitution and by-laws for each member (these were distributed at the January 1964 meeting). Decisions to meet once a month and in the evening were also confirmed. The minutes of this meeting also contain some personal comments, content very rarely found in later records. First, a woman at the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* was given honorary membership in the Club due to the publicity she provided in the newspaper. “The President said that in as much as Mr. Harry Sanderson has such a way with the ladies he should have the honor of presenting the card to Mrs. Glendinning.” Later, Mr. Sanderson got even. The minutes record “At the suggestion of Mr. Sanderson that it be put in the minutes, the President and Mrs. will do their fighting at home.”



In January 1969, *Murex beauii* (now *Siratus beauii* Fischer & Bernardi 1857) was adopted (“unanimously approved”) as the Club “symbol.” As such, it appears in some form on SSC communications (at left, from 1970 Shell Show brochure), including the website. The October 1974 minutes make note of a celebration of the Oberle’s fiftieth wedding anniversary at which time the Club gave the Oberle’s a *Murex (Siratus) beauii* along with an appropriate display stand (given to Helen, Jack was in the hospital due to a fall).

## Membership and Dues

The initial committed band of 15 members grew as word of the SSC spread. By March of 1967 membership was reported to be 84. The minutes of November 2005 indicate a membership of 126 (but that 65 were not current with their dues); in April 2010 the membership was reported as 138. By the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club in April 2013, it was reported that Sarasota Shell Club had 151 paid members. However, the membership chair noted that by her count, some 72 of these individuals were “casual” members, meaning they paid dues but seldom, if ever, attended meetings or took part in Club activities.

As noted above, the initial Club dues were \$2.00 per year. By May of 1980, the initiation fee (a one-time fee charged to new members) was \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a couple. This initiation fee included a name badge to be worn at SSC functions. The May 1980 renewal dues for ongoing members were set at \$3.00 for an individual, \$5.00 for a couple. In the mid-80s, renewal fees were raised to \$6 for a single individual and \$10 for a family. Initiation fees remained the same (\$10).

In action in November 1992 the renewal fee became \$10.00 for an individual and \$15.00 for a family. This was raised to \$15 for individuals and \$20 for families in 2001 (where it remains; the initiation fee is now \$21.50 for an individual and \$33 for a family).

In other membership action, Frank Rinck and Louise Danforth were made life members in April 1968 and Pauline Robertson and Byron Riggle were declared life members in October 1968. Jack and Helen Oberle were made “honorary life members” (Sept 1969 minutes, award made in October). Peggy Williams, June Bailey, and Sylvia Thompson were announced as life members in March 2013.



Jack and Helen Oberle were given the title of Director Emeritus in March 1977. Bob Morrison (at left) was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award in February 2012. Peggy Williams (at right) was given a plaque recognizing her 40 years of service to the Club (April 2012).



In September 1980, Ed Petuch and Selma Lawson were declared Honorary Members. Tommy Young, representing the SSC link to the Sarasota schools’ Carefree Learner, was extended the title of Honorary Member when he retired (February 2008).

## Meetings

### Purposes

The purpose of a shell club is salient. It consists of a group of people who enjoy collecting shells, learning about shells, sharing tips and stories about shells and shelling, displaying shells, and using shells in artistic ways.

These purposes were noted in a variety of comments in the minutes of early board and Club meetings. “It was agreed that there should be talks or interesting showings of shells at each future meeting, the primary aim being to create interest among and instruct and help beginning collectors in any way possible. This met with whole-hearted approval of all present” (Minutes of October 1, 1964, meeting of Club officers).

The minutes of the January 1967 meeting noted that an important purpose of SSC activities was “...imparting shell knowledge.” This goal was achieved in a variety of ways. Meetings often included a short talk or report on some aspect of shell development, taxonomy and scientific names, or the development and organization of a collection. Beginning in the fall of 1998, a member gave a report on a shell at each meeting. This task was often assigned to a new member as a way to get them involved.

In addition, each meeting had a program (see section below) given by a knowledgeable person who presented a commentary about some taxonomic group of shells (e.g., cones, cowries) or some location where he or she had collected shells. The minutes almost always note that such programs were well received, especially when accompanied by attractive shells and/or pictures (often a slide show in the early days).

The Club took its educational and motivational mission beyond its own boundaries by organizing a public shell show less than one year after its founding. This activity is discussed in detail below.

### **Locations**

In the first months, meetings were held in the homes of members. As the SSC grew in numbers, this became a considerable burden for those called upon to host the meetings. Thus it was that meetings were moved to the Community Room of the Palmer National Bank Building (indeed in July 1966, the person at the bank who facilitated use of this space was made an “honorary member”).

For a variety of reasons, it was necessary to move meeting location in the following decades. In September 1978, the location for the monthly meetings became the Ellis Sarasota Bank and Trust Building, and soon thereafter, in early 1980, there was a move to the cafeteria of Sarasota High School. Fortunately a more permanent location was secured in the fall of 1980 when SSC moved its meetings to a room at Mote Marine Aquarium.

Most meetings were straightforward and uneventful, but the January 8 meeting in 1987 was held in the parking lot at Mote since no one had a key to access the building. Fortunately the weather was favorable and a short meeting could be conducted.

Growth in the number of persons attending meetings made it advisable to find a larger room than was available at Mote Marine Aquarium. Fortunately a suitable room was found at a Sarasota Fire Station on Waldemere Street and the September 2011 meeting was in that location. The large meeting room accommodates the usual attendance, nearby parking is adequate, and access is easy given the location near arterial road Tamiami Trail.

### **Elections and Officers**

Club officers include a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Several additional persons serve as members of the Board. Over the years, other positions were created, including

Chair of the Shell Show, Corresponding Secretary, and Historian (the latter position approved in March 1966).

Elections are held annually in April. Club minutes on **many, many** occasions comment on the difficulty in finding persons to serve, indeed, there were frequently difficulties in getting persons to be on the nominating committee (since most SSC members knew how hard it was to fill positions). The effect of this problem is that once in office, individuals usually served for several years.

In this vein, the minutes of March 1972 record the comment that it was time for some “new blood and energy” to be represented among the Club officers (following which the search for nominating committee members was tabled for lack of persons volunteering to do this task!). In March of 1985 the minutes note that it seemed a “clique” ran the SSC while reporting that the nominating committee could not get any new members to take office. A similar impasse led to a change in the make-up of the nominating committee in January 1987 due to a “problem of getting officers for next year.” The minutes of January 2012 note difficulty in filling positions for Club leadership. Thus, although the Club has grown in membership numbers, it remains difficult to find persons to take on leadership responsibilities. Over the years, the minutes show a flow of repeated names in leadership roles making it evident that some members share a large amount of the thanks for SSC activities and vitality.

An appendix to this history provides a listing of Club officers since its inception.

### Programs

The first several meetings of the Sarasota Shell Club had no “program,” but rather members of the Club brought shells from their personal collections to show and discuss. The November, 1963, minutes are the first to make note of a program. Indeed the business meeting was adjourned after 10 minutes to get to the “meat of the meeting,” a program by Mr. and Mrs. John Proetz (at left) of the Lake Worth Shell Club. The program focused on Florida shells, using colored slides and a tape-recorded commentary. The minutes note that it was a “wonderful” program. The Proetz team returned to several later meetings to give similar programs on shells from Florida and from around the world (for which on at least one occasion the minutes note they received a standing ovation).



In February 1967, Professor Carl Keeler gave a well-received program on marine pharmacology. At another meeting, Selman Lawson of St. Petersburg gave a program of colored slides on

shelling in the West Indies and Jamaica (the program being held up by a bad projector bulb—technology is a problem of long standing!). Lula Siekman of St. Petersburg gave the November 1967 slide program. It was noted that the program was well received and the minutes made special note of the fact that she used “common names” in her spoken comments.

The January 1968 program was given by Dan Steger on the “Horn Shells of the Gulf of Mexico.” The 200 colored slides focused on “the genera *Cerithium* and *Triforis*.” Many shells in these genera (*Cerithium atratum* at right) are quite small and the minutes of the meeting note that “Perhaps these miniature shells were not of much interest to some members but they bring the realization that a great number of small shells exist.”



In February 1971, Bob Lipe gave an excellent program with slides of living snails; the focus was on the snails of Bimini. These early programs, and many others not mentioned here, are included in a separate file of SSC programs.

### **Mini-ed**

The Club meetings also emphasized the educational function that was central to its purposes. This was frequently in the form of “mini-ed” programs during which knowledgeable members gave short talks on issues related to shells and shell collecting.

Several early meetings gave attention to taxonomy and the nature and importance of scientific names. The tides, and when and where to shell, were discussed during a fall 1966 meeting. Over the decades, talks on these topics were repeated periodically so as to provide useful information to new members on these very practical topics.

At many meetings in recent years, new SSC members are provided with an interesting shell (with the understanding that they will give a presentation about that shell at the next meeting).

### **Raffles**

Raffles have a very long tradition in the practices of the Sarasota Shell Club. The first raffle recorded in the minutes occurred in October of 1963 as noted in these words: “Before the meeting numbers were passed out to all members present for the purpose of giving some beautiful bi-valves to someone present.” Similar comments are to be found in the minutes of most meetings, with the observation that the prizes were quite desirable, e.g., “Nice specimen shells were awarded as door prizes as usual” (January, 1965). Raffles continue to be a part of each meeting to the present day.

## Christmas

From the beginning, the members of the Sarasota Shell Club had an exchange of gifts at the December meeting. The minutes of November 1965 specify that the Christmas party would be at Perkins Pancake House and that the gift value for the exchange should be about \$1.00 (later raised to “2 to 3 dollars” in December 1977 and to \$5 in 1982).

The 1967 Christmas party was held at Martine’s. Participants had the choice of chicken (at \$2.95) or roast beef (at \$3.75), these prices including fruit, salad, dessert, and tip. The 1969 party was at the Plaza Restaurant (meal for \$3.50) on 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The 1974 party returned to Martine’s with a cost of \$6.50 for a prime rib meal.

The 1979 party was at the Rainforest Restaurant (pictured). The meal featured chicken supreme for \$7.50. The minutes note that members took action for the Club to pay the 15% tip and to provide \$20.00 to have a cash bar. The 1980 Christmas meal moved to the Crown House Restaurant.



Daniel and Helen Gifford, Carol Smiths mother, Al and Helene Avellanet

The meal cost \$9.00 per person. The minutes note that gifts should be shell-related and approximately \$2.50 to 3.50 in value.

Clearly members were concerned with costs; the minutes annually indicated the costs of the meals as they selected the restaurant. Thus it might not be surprising that in 1981 it was decided that a restaurant was too expensive. The December meeting that year was held at the regular meeting place and refreshments were served. However, a change of heart soon occurred and the 1983 Christmas gathering was held at the Chex Med Restaurant on Siesta Key. The meal cost was \$15.00 per person. However, perhaps in view of cost, no gift exchange was held.

The Christmas meal/party tradition ended in December 1984, but not due to cost. Rather, no one would take on the responsibility to make the necessary arrangements. So a regular meeting was held with many give-aways and with refreshments.



## Sales

Members often brought shells to meetings to be sold. On some occasions this activity took the form of a silent auction.

## Miscellaneous Issues

The constitution and by-laws were adopted in late 1963. A revision of these documents was undertaken in 1967 and the changes were approved in January 1968. In April 1975, further revisions were undertaken, in part with an eye toward incorporation. After some changes and input from legal counsel, new by-laws were adopted in September 1975. The SSC then took action to incorporate. The bylaws were modified in the late 1970s and reprinted in 1980. (The Club paid \$112.85 for 300 copies, March 1980 minutes).

In February 1966 Sarasota Shell Club Members traveled to a location in Venice to meet with individuals there who were interested in beginning a shell club.

In October 1981, it was determined that there would be a 10 cent fine for anyone not wearing his or her SSC name tag at regular meetings.

Although not a major money maker, the minutes often listed the number of members caught in violation. The fine was raised to 25 cents in November 1995 and has continued to the present day.



The minutes of September 1983 indicate a warning by the SSC President: Club activities will be cancelled if people do not volunteer and participate.

Snacks at meetings were discontinued as of September 2008. Members were invited to BYOS. However, members missed the food and a 3-month reinstatement was approved (September 2009 board minutes) and a budget of \$50 was provided. Apparently this trial was successful and another \$100 was provided in the January 10 board minutes. A member vote in March 2010 supported the presence of snacks. Unfortunately this vote was negated by a change of policy by Mote: a \$150 cleaning charge if snacks were served.

## Shell Show

Although there was an action to change the name to Shell Festival in November 1998, the Shell Show name has stuck around and continues to be the preferred designation. The Shell Show remains the major activity of the Club each year.

## Planning

The first mention of a Shell Show is in the minutes of the December 1963 meeting. Building upon the efforts of Club co-founder Helen Oberle as Show Chair, the first show was held April 2, 3, and 4 of 1964. The show was held at the Lido Beach Casino (although the minutes of the March meeting indicated it was to be held at the Nixon Building). The show was “very successful” with a reported attendance of about 600.

The 1965 show was also held at the Lido Beach Casino, but apparently in the midst of some disagreements with management. This led to a meeting with the city manager during which SSC members sought “to determine our rights and privileges at the show” (March 15 minutes). The meeting was noted as having “resolved” the issues.



Following the first two shows, it was determined that a formal leadership position for this event needed to be created. In the April 1966 meeting of the Club officers, the appointment of a “Show Chair” was approved in a formal action. One significant (and ongoing) responsibility (and frustration) for the Show Chair pertains to members volunteering to work at various tasks during the planning stages and at the show. “Members were asked to list their names and the time they will be available for help at the Show.” (minutes of March 1966). Picture (above, right) is from 1966 Shell Show.



The location for the 1969 Shell Show was moved to the National Guard Armory (picture on left) on Ringling Blvd (after the Lido Beach Casino site became unavailable). For reasons that are not entirely clear, the 1971 Shell Show was moved to the Civic Auditorium on Tamiami Trail (apparently a decision for which not all members were in agreement, as noted in the September 1970 minutes).

After much discussion, and not a little tension, the Shell Show was moved from the Civic Auditorium in Sarasota to the Civic Center in Bradenton beginning with the 2011 Show. Attendance in this new venue was down about 20% from the previous year.

In the March 1986 minutes, those responsible for the Shell Show gave a public scolding to Club members due to a lack of volunteers. The scolding included the comment that some people had to do the work of 3. This problem, though not often recorded in the minutes in such dramatic form, is never far from the front burner as Shell Show time draws near.

### **Finances**

The annual Shell Show has long been a primary source of funds for the Club. The 1964 show had income of \$319.35 and expenses of \$119.64, thus yielding a profit of \$199.71. Much of this income came from the sale of donated shells (which in the early years were labeled, packaged, and priced at regular Club meetings). The board meeting minutes of January 1966 record a discussion on this point. Each member was to donate shells worth \$5.00 (or donate \$5.00 in cash). Apparently some members felt this assessment was unfair, however, it was determined to keep this policy in place for the 1967 show. A Club member's garage was used as a collection point for the required donations and purchased shells.

The Shell Show provided an opportunity for members to sell shells. When sold at the Shell Show, a portion (25%) of the sale price was to be given to the Club. In some later minutes the SSC share was noted as 20% (e.g., September 1978).

The minutes of the Club do not indicate the cost to attend the two earliest shows. It is recorded that admission to the 1965 Shell Show was set at 30 cents. The admission fee was raised to 40 cents the following year. By the Show of 1982, the fee for admission had risen to \$1.50. In 2010 the entry fee was set at \$5.00.

The 1967 Show had a profit of \$389.30 and the 1968 Show a profit of \$236.28. However, the 1970 show only made \$49.70 and the 1972 Show actually lost \$5.00 largely due to a decrease of 150 paid admissions. The 1988 Show lost more than \$1300, but this was an aberration as most Shows do show a profit. [Financial outcome of the Shell Show for each year may be found in an Appendix]

The minutes of March 1969 include the information that Tucker Abbott would be interested in coming to the Shell Show to present a major award; however with honorarium and expenses the cost would be \$500; an amount the Club felt was more than it was able to spend.

Attendance in 1979 was 2917. The March 1984 minutes note that the “usual” attendance is around 2000 regardless of how publicity is done. However attendance has declined somewhat in recent years.

Attendance was 990 in 2009, 1290 in 2010, 1200 in 2012, and 930 in 2013.

## Exhibits

Exhibits, both shells and shell crafts, have been the central feature of the annual Shell Show since its beginning. In the early years, the competitive prizes were restricted to SSC members (as the March 1966 minutes reference a Mr. Hepler who was told he could exhibit, but “not in competition”). By action of the Club, this restriction was lifted, and beginning in 1967 competition was open to all exhibitors.



1983 Dupont trophy winner, Peggy Williams receives congratulations from June Bailey.

The Dupont Trophy was awarded for the first time in 1970 (for the most outstanding exhibit or collection). Other awards and trophies have been added at various times.

Over the years, the Club minutes periodically note with dismay that SSC members do not exhibit.

## Crafters

While the collection and identification of shells was the primary activity for the Club, from early on, the use of shells in artistic work was also pursued and enjoyed by members. The photographic archives of the Club show numerous depictions of artistic pieces. Indeed the announcement for the very first shell show indicates awards for the best “Shell Craft” and “Shell Craft Honorable Mention.” (The photograph on the left shows artisans and their work from the 1965 show, on right on next page from 1984.)



By the turn of the century, SSC members began to realize that shell craft had the potential to provide revenue for the club. Led by the vision and skills of Club members Lynn Gaulin and Fran Schlusemann the Club provided motivation and training. The outcome of this activity was to generate artistic pieces for sale at the annual show. It did not take long for these sales to become a major source of revenue to support Club activities and charitable giving.



Artistic activity has come to represent a significant focus of many SSC members. Following discussion, the October 2012 minutes note that these practitioners are now officially known as “Artisans.”

## Field Trips

As early as the third meeting of the Club, mention is made of field trips for the purpose of collecting shells. The first field trip seems to have occurred off the coast from Venice, and a second trip in early 1964 off the coast from Naples. Lido Beach, the “north side of New Pass,” and the “end” of Longboat Key were also early destinations. In later minutes, Fort DeSoto was mentioned often as a collecting location and there were periodic trips across the state to Peanut Island. A trip to Key Largo planned in June 1977 did not materialize. However, later trips to the Florida Keys occurred on a number of occasions. A trip to Marco Island is pictured below.

Fossil shells have long attracted the interest of some shell Club members. The minutes of the January 1967 meeting mention a trip to the “Caloosahatchie area east of Ft. Myers” to search for fossil shells “in rough terrain.” This successful trip resulted in one “rare find” (though no mention of what it was).

Liability issues connected to field trips were first noted in September 1983. Apparently some disagreements over this issue were quite contentious since there are two sets of minutes—one with a written note by the elected Club Secretary indicating that another member had also taken minutes, minutes which she disavowed. Whatever



the outcome of those disagreements, ultimately a disclaimer form was prepared which members had to sign before participation on field trips.

The March 1986 minutes record one significant field trip snafu. On a planned night collecting trip, leader Peggy Williams couldn't find the shellers and they couldn't find her.

## **Library**

Purchases of books for use by Club members were undertaken from very early in the Club's history. Over the years the SSC minutes periodically note new purchases and follow-up by encouraging members to make use of the books the Club owned.

Equally important, and as a public service, books on shells were purchased and donated to various local libraries. In addition, for many years, an appropriate book about shells was given to a public library in honor of a deceased member.

On other occasions, the minutes note donations of books and funds (March 1978) to a library or outright financial gifts, e.g., Manatee Library \$500 (September 1978).

## **Finances**

### **Club budget and bank balances**

The first treasurer's report in the archives is dated October 10, 1963. It notes a balance of \$30.00. Expenses for a card file (70 cents) in which to keep member's records, and notebooks for the secretary and treasurer (70 and 75 cents, respectively) were itemized. A line item noted that 30 postcards were sent out as a reminder of the next meeting (cost \$1.20). On the income side, names of those paying \$1 for dues are sometimes provided.

The treasury balance for December 1963 was \$23.62, a sum which had declined to \$13.87 by January 1964.

A decision made at the May 1964 meeting allowed expenses under \$5.00 to be made from petty cash; amounts larger than that would be brought to a Club meeting for action. Those attending that May meeting also affirmed that dues would remain \$2.00 per year.

In September, 1984, it was determined to send for samples of Duncan Hines fruit cakes which might be sold as a fund raiser. No evidence is ever provided as to the outcome of this action.

An Appendix provides a summary of bank balance activity over the years.

## **Charitable Giving**

By the time the Club reached the end of its first decade, financial resources had increased significantly. Members began to think about appropriate ways to handle some of the funds which were not needed for SSC activities. An initial effort to donate \$40 to the Salvation Army was delayed by the issue of whether a nonprofit could legally donate to a charity (minutes of November 1973). The subject of charitable donations returned in March 1975 and was discussed by the Board in April. It was determined that it was legal for donations to be made and the Club decided that interest earned on SSC funds would be directed to this end.

Over the years, the Club has donated significant amounts of money to various causes. The sections below enumerate those most often included in Club generosity.

### **Mote Marine Aquarium**

Mote Marine Aquarium came into being shortly after the Shell Club was formed. Early on Mote provided space for a display of shells; a space for which SSC members took responsibility. Mote also had educational and outreach activities some of which the Club chose to support. And, as noted above, for many years Mote provided a room for the Club's monthly meeting.

The first mention of giving to Mote (\$25) appears in the Board (but not Club meeting) minutes of April 1976. In April 1977 and again in March 1978, \$100 was given to Mote for an "Associate Membership" (an amount that included \$25 for the membership and a \$75 donation). The minutes note that this amount was increased to \$200 in April 1978 and the same amount was given in 1979.

In March 1980, the Club authorized up to \$1000 for expenses surrounding the shell display at Mote and added an additional \$200 in September. A donation of \$500 was approved in 1981 (although \$500 for an underwater camera was voted down in September 1981). The Club approved a donation of \$500 in 1982 (and the Board approved an additional \$200 in April 82). The Club donated \$300 in May 1983, \$200 in September 1983, and \$315 in 1984. In the following years amounts and purposes were: April 1985, \$500 to Children's Program and \$500 to Science Center; November 1985, \$300; March 1986, \$250 to Children's Program and \$250 to Science Center; 1987, \$250 to Lab and \$300 to Children's Program (also \$250 to Benthic Fund); January 1988, \$500 in memory of Charles Hertweck; September 1988, \$500 for Mote and \$500 for Children's Program. In the following years the gifts were: \$500 in April 1989, \$250 in April 1990, \$500 in 1991, \$500 in 1992, \$500 in 1993, \$500 in 1994, \$500 in 1995, \$500 in 1996, \$1000 in 1997, \$500 in 1998, and \$800 in 1999.

Thus, by the turn of the century, the SSC had donated over \$10,000 to Mote and its programs. Additional gifts in more recent years, e.g., \$500 in 2001; \$500 in 2012, have added to the overall total (which would now be near \$15,000).

### **Carefree Learner**

The Carefree Learner, “a floating laboratory” which was developed for use by the Sarasota schools, drew early interest by SSC members and they expressed strong support. A donation of



\$1000 was made in late 1977 and a note of thanks was received in January 1978. Another donation of \$750 was made in March 1978, an amount that finished the fund-raising for the project. Ongoing support consisted of \$500 in 1979, \$800 in 1980, \$500 in 1981, \$300 in 1982; \$300 in 1983, \$300 in 1984, \$800 in 1985, \$250 in 1986 and 1987, \$500 in 1988, \$500 in 1991, \$1000 in 1992, \$500 in 1993, \$250 in 1994, \$500 in 1995 and 1996, \$1000 in 1997, and \$500 in 1998 and 1999. More recent amounts in the records include \$750 in 2001, \$500 in 2008, \$1000 in 2009, \$2000 in 2010, \$2400 in 2011, \$1700 in 2012, and \$1500 in 2013. The grand total now exceeds \$20,000.

### **Bailey-Mathews Shell Museum**

The Bailey-Mathews Shell Museum on Sanibel Island opened on a limited basis in June of 1995 with a grand opening in November. The SSC has supported this Museum over the years through donations and memberships. The first recorded donation was \$300 in 1994, followed by \$100 gifts in 1995 and 1996, and \$250 in 1998. More recent donations included \$200 in 2001, \$250 in 2009, \$200 in 2010 and 2013, and \$500 in 2011 and 2012.

### **New College**

New College, located near Sarasota Bay off University Parkway, has an active program in marine science. In support of students in that program, SSC gave \$200 in 1980; \$200 in 1981, \$300 in 2010, and \$1000 in 2011 and 2012. Students who have been supported by these funds have provided reports to the Club on their research activities.

### **Other Organizations**

The Club gave \$800 to the Sarasota Sea Turtle Association between 1980 and 1984. In April 1977, \$560 was donated to the South Florida (Bishop) Museum for a “fossil shell display.” In



April 1984, \$500 was given to the Florida State Museum paleontology department and in October 1988, \$250 (\$500 in 2012) was given to the Florida Museum and \$250 (\$600 in 2011 and \$500 in 2012) to Florida State Museum. One hundred dollars was given to the Delaware Museum in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

In 1981, \$500 was donated to the Riverview High School Marine Biology program and in 1982, \$200 was provided to the Manatee County gifted program. In April 2010, \$1000 was given to Mote Marine to support an internship for a local high school student.

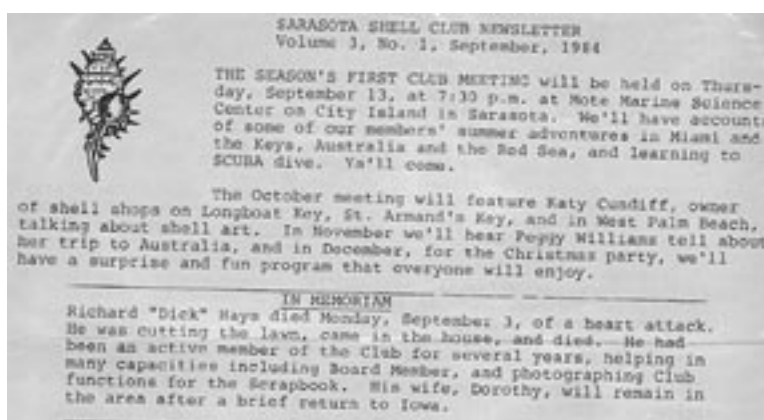
Gifts of \$250 for a study of calico scallops and \$250 to “pelican man” were made in April 1990. A gift of \$100 was made in April 1994 to the “Ice Age Museum” and \$100 was given to the Walter Sage Memorial in April 1996.

The Sarasota Firefighters Benevolent Fund was given \$300 in 2012 as a measure of thanks for the use of the meeting room at the Fire Station on Waldemere Street.

## Newsletter

The first mention of a newsletter occurs in the October 1982 minutes. The minutes note that Peggy Williams got an ovation for her efforts in this regard

In the early years, the newsletter was primarily one page and announced meetings, meeting programs, brief notes about SSC activities, and schedules for shell clubs (and shell shows). A portion of the September 1984 newsletter is at right.



The September 1994 newsletter announced a major change. “The Board of the Sarasota Shell Club finally convinced me to try this expanded newsletter format. I have resisted for years trying to put together anything more than meeting notices and short news, because I know of many newsletter editors who have been stuck with writing the whole thing themselves. However, several people have promised faithfully to contribute articles on a regular basis, and we hope the members of the Club will tell about shelling experiences they have.” With this announcement, the newsletter expanded to 4 pages.

Unfortunately Peggy's fears were to come true. A note in the newsletter of January 1996 begins "I was afraid of this....If you like these expanded newsletters, write something for them or we'll go back to meeting notices of one page!" By December the concern escalated to "If you're disappointed in a short newsletter, contribute an article! I refuse to write four pages of prose every month! This declaration was in bold print and large font!

Peggy Williams resigned in 1998 and Debbie Ingrao became editor. Em Sower took the editor's duties in September of 1999. Lynn Galin began a term as editor in September 2005. Peggy Williams returned as editor in 2006.

The content of the newsletter revolved around several themes. First was news of the Club, including meeting dates, program announcements, information about field trips, and news of members. An important part of this theme concerned information about the annual Shell Show. Second, information about shells and shelling. Essays including facts about shell structures such as the mantle or operculum. There were also notes about shelling times and locations. Third were accounts of shelling adventures undertaken by Club members. Nearly every corner of the world received attention at some point. Fourth were notes about creating collections and finding ways to exhibit those collections. Fifth, humor. Essays enjoyed poking fun at the foibles of shell collectors.

### **COA (Conchologists of America)**

Sarasota Shell Club members have long been active in the organization known as Conchologists of America. On several occasions, 1983, 2002, and 2013, the SSC has been given the honor (and the considerable responsibility and work) to serve as hosts of the annual COA meeting. The inset provides the names of the SSC team which planned the 1983 COA meeting.

<u>CONVENTION COMMITTEE</u>	
June Bailey	Wine & Cheese Party
Mathilde Duffy	Program Cover Design
Jane Forbush	Registrations
Bette Hamilton	Banquet
Charles Hertweck	Programs & Speakers
Vi Hertweck	Banquet Decorations & Door Prizes
Peggy Williams	Field Trips
	Dick Forbush Convention Chairman

### **Miscellaneous Notes**

In the early 1970s, several members went to Memorial Hospital and gave programs on shells as a kind of "therapy." Members reported a great deal of satisfaction from this activity as the visits were "worthwhile and appreciated" (January 1971). A note of thanks was received from the hospital dated February 19, 1971.

The November 1971 minutes announced the opening of Morrison's galleries on Siesta Key. Bob Morrison had also become a member of the Shell Club.

The November 1971 minutes mention correspondence concerning *Of Sea and Shore* magazine published by Tom Rice of Port Gamble, WA.

For a number of years in the mid-1990s, the Sarasota Shell Club participated in the Adopt a Beach program. The Club was assigned to South Lido Beach and periodic clean-ups were undertaken. As per other SSC activities, interest waned and the February 1996 newsletter noted that only 2 people appeared for the January clean-up day.

### **Fifty Years and Counting**

Since the idea of a Sarasota Shell Club emerged from the interests of Jack and Helen Oberle more than 50 years ago, SSC has successfully fulfilled its mission. Although no organization with such a lengthy history is without its difficulties (just who will volunteer for leadership roles?!), it is not an exaggeration to conclude that SSC has served its members and its constituents with collegiality, educational outreach, and engaging activities. Such a legacy should serve as both foundation and motivation to current and future members.