

OUR HISTORY

Practically every day in the years of World War II, 1942-45, someone would come to the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art, and obtain permission to go to the third floor and have Dr. Howard R. Hill, Curator of Marine Biology, name the shells which the wives, children or sweethearts of men in the war service had sent from some place in the South Seas or from other parts of the world.

There were so many requests, that Dr. Hill knew that a new shell club should be organized; that there should be a place where beginners could come regularly to learn about shells.

During the fall of 1943, the first Marine Life Class was formed at the Museum. There were 16 boys and girls in that first class and Dr. Hill was their instructor on Saturday mornings, as he continued to be for the next 15 years until the time of his retirement. There were also classes in botany, minerals, paleontology, etc. Each Junior or Senior High School in the district from Santa Monica to Laguna Beach could refer two outstanding students to take advantage of these courses.

The Marine Life Class proved very popular. Some students liked the course so well they took it two or three times. A few charter members of the Pacific Shell Club were also members of the first Marine Life Class.

The third Sunday afternoon, starting in January 1944, was the time set to organize a new Club which was called "The Junior Shell Club". In June, 1945, the Club thought they had acquired enough information about shells that they could change their name to the "Pacific Shell Club", the name which it bears today.

A field trip was held every year for the Pacific Shell Club and for the Marine Life Class. Those were the days when gasoline was rationed by the government, and before the Museum owned a truck which could be used for field trips. We took street cars from downtown Los Angeles. We met at the Pacific Electric Station, at 6th and Los Angeles Streets and took a "red car" to San Pedro. There we took a bus out to Cabrillo Beach, with each person carrying a pail or jars to hold the shells and sea life to be collected.

The first meeting of the Junior Shell Club was held in an alcove on the third floor, not far from Dr. Hill's office. There were about 12 charter members. Anyone who wished to learn about shells was invited to join. Jokingly, Dr. Hill said the members could be from 8 to 80 years of age. The Club grew in membership, in knowledge and in enthusiasm. At one time the Pacific Shell Club had 145 paid-up members and the majority were young people.

Private individuals interested in the Pacific Shell Club sometimes donated duplicates from their shell collections for the members of the Club. The finest shells ever given to the Club came from the National Museum in 1945 when two barrels full of choice shells from Bikini were donated to the Club to be distributed to members as gifts over a period of months.

Back to the Future (Contd.)

Dr. Hill used to say that the best way to get a person interested in shells was to give them two or three shells and then they would be eager to get more. He especially liked to take students to collect shells during low tide. He had the thrill of helping scores of young people to find their very first "live shell". He was always very enthusiastic about all forms of natural history, and this enthusiasm and great interest was an inspiration to many, many young people, some of whom have taken some branch of Natural History as their life work. Some of his former students now hold positions of importance in the finest institutions of learning in the United States.

THE FOREGOING HISTORY OF THE PACIFIC SHELL CLUB WAS OBTAINED FROM THE NOTES OF A TALK GIVEN AT THE PACIFIC SHELL CLUB, By ELIZABETH R. HILL, WIDOW OF DR. HOWARD R. HILL, PH.D., ON JANUARY 19, 1964. IN CLOSING HER TALK, MRS. HILL EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE PACIFIC SHELL CLUB WOULD CONTINUE TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE, TO PROSPER, AND TO FULFILL THE EARNEST WISHES OF ITS FOUNDER. SHE ALSO GAVE THANKS FOR THE HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP BESTOWED UPON HER.

- EDYTHE S. JENSEN, DEC. 1972

PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE PACIFIC SHELL CLUB

1945-1946	Ivan Geyette	1975-1977	Mark Matheny
1946-1947	Dr. Howard Hill	1977-1979	Annetta Billings
1947-1948	Don Wilson	1979-1980	Rillis Heady
1948-1949	Glen Russel	1980-1982	Carmen Gutierrez
1950-1951	Frank Hoover	1982-1984	John T. Boyd
1951-1953	Arnold Johnson	1984-1985	Rae Smith
1953-1955	Crawford Cate	1985-1987	Frank Jewett
1955-1956	Milton Zim	1987-1989	Charles Waters
1956-1957	Crawford Cate	1989-1991	Steven L. Maddocks
1957-1959	Ralph Hall	1991-1993	Frank Jewett
1959-1960	Ralph Kettenring	1993-1995	David Nesheim
1960-1961	Leroy Poorman	1995-1997	Janice Abdulian
1961-1963	Walter Barber	1997-1999	Kathy Kalohi
1963-1964	Leroy Poorman	1999-2001	Frank Gilbert
1964-1965	Martha Dippell	2001-2003	Phil Liff-Grief
1965-1966	Bob Howley		
1966-1967	Martha Dippell		
1967-1969	Orval Blake		
1969-1970	Dot Myhra		
1970-1971	Orval Blake		
1971-1972	Edythe S. Jensen		
1972-1973	William T. McManamon		
1973-1975	Frank Jewett		

THE YEARS OF GROWTH

After the retirement of Dr. Howard R. Hill, who served 37 years as Curator at the Los Angeles County Museum, George P. Kanakoff took over the sponsorship of the Pacific Shell Club. Mr. Kanakoff was Curator of Invertebrate Paleontology.

Succeeding Mr. Kanakoff as sponsor, since 1965, has been Dr. James H. McLean. Dr. McLean studied ecology and functional anatomy at Stanford University and spent six years at the Hopkins Marine Station, Pacific Grove, California. He came to the Museum in 1965 as the Curator of Invertebrate Zoology, and has performed outstanding enterprise in that field.

The roster of members in 1964-1965 included names of people who are still active in the world of shells as specialists, educators, or hobbyists; e.g., Crawford Cate, Twila Bratcher, Dr. James H. McLean, Roy Poorman, Dr. Donald Shasky, Dot and Bill Myhra, Bob Howley, Orval and Evelyn Blake, Fern Anderson, Rose Burch, Lois Van Deventer, Ralph and Marjorie Hall, Martha Dippell, Margaret Chavannes, Pamela Gates, Glen and Pearl Snyder, Alberta Jones, and Grace and Ed Forbes.

In January of 1965, Orval Blake designed and produced the Club's decal windshield stickers. This is a fine reproduction of a Buccinidae, a Kellet's Whelk, *Kelletia kelleti*, Forbes; chosen as the Pacific Shell Club emblem in 1955.

Our Library, now numbering about 70 book and pamphlets, was proposed in 1965 by Lois Van Deventer. It is much used by members, and the books range from children's booklets to semi-scientific volumes.

In 1969, a newsletter called "Las Conchas" was begun with Martha Dippel as editor. The masthead was designed by Bridget Porter.

On June 11, 1969, the officers of the Pacific Shell Club applied for Articles of Incorporation as a Non-Profit Corporation. The directors were Orval C. Blake, Fern Anderson, Bernice Gold, Claire Plebank, and Lois Van Deventer.

On August 5, 1971, member William T. McManamon, attorney for the Club, announced receipt from the Secretary of State, of the State of California, of the Articles of Incorporation as a Non-Profit Corporation. Mr. McManamon also drafted the constitution and by-laws.

A major accomplishment of the Pacific Shell Club in 1970-1971, is the beautifully artistic and meticulous display of shells on the second floor of the Museum. This consists of a glass case 15'x T, containing California shells from the upper and lower intertidal rocky shore area, from the intertidal sandflats and offshore deep water. Also shells from the Gulf of California ranging from San Felipe south to Mazatlan. All shells are labeled and provide a matchless method for hobbyists to identify their collections. This case was designed by Dot Myhra, Dr. James McLean, and the museum agencies. The shells were provided by Fern Anderson, Dot Myhra, and the late Jean Wilkins.

Since 1963, a program for blind children has been authored and conducted by Twila Bratcher. Also for many years we have had a Junior Study Program, under the tutelage of Mr. S. Ralph Hall.

Many have left their imprint on the preservation and progress of our Club, and to all those, wherever they may be, we give our utmost **thanks and appreciation!**

- Edythe S. Jensen