



The Naturalist

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

A Monthly Newsletter

Volume 1 No. 8 October 2007

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President's Message

Greetings All,

It seems finally fall is coming. The trees are producing acorns, beechnuts, walnuts, hickory nuts like crazy. What a sight. The new class got to experience the bugs, plants and such at York River State Park this month, and I have gotten lots of feedback on that adventure. The new cohort is a great bunch of people, an exciting addition to our group. Good things are starting. Our group is doing some really great things. Several members of our group are out and about this month measuring trees of various species and sizes. It is usually an adventure, one, to find the tree, and two to figure out just where and how to measure it. Our chapter may have a national contender on its hands, as Sieg, Alice and Mary have a real treasure of a tree they have submitted. The sad side though is some trees are gone. They are just not there. Walking all around historic Williamsburg back and forth in front of the landmark we had been provided, tree identification sheets from the Virginia Tech web page, GPS unit and such in hand, Susan and I could not find the tree we were assigned to measure. We climbed through hedges, and on paths that the normal tourist would never take, found some other really cool trees. There is a tree across from the windmill that looks like it was struck by lightning, and the middle is pretty well hollowed out. There is a nice "orchard" of ironwood trees, at least 6, that are all a fairly good size behind all the houses in the area. But the tree we were to

measure was gone. A bit saddened by this, we pressed on. We had one more tree to measure on the campus of The College of William and Mary. That trip eclipsed Colonial Williamsburg, where there we had strong hope that the demise of the tree was caused by Hurricane Isabel. Here at William and Mary, it was somewhat clear that progress got the better of the tree, as access to the site was cordoned off with chain link fence, piles of construction materials were about. Lots of big yellow machinery was moving around. All of this brought home the importance of finding and labeling these big trees. If people knew they were special they really might save them or at least pause, hopefully change plans, and work to save the trees. I am so proud of this chapter, for embracing this project and chasing down the trees we can save, and adding new ones to increase the survival of more trees. It is putting all the things we learn to do as Master Naturalist in practice in a very positive way. As always my best to you all. Cheers,

Kari Abbott, Member and President
Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist



Stephen Living, foreground, leads Cohort 2 to the pond at York River State Park during the Wetlands Ecology Session September 26.

Upcoming Events

October 10: Monthly Chapter Meeting with Pot Luck and Meet and Greet. Cohort 1 treats Cohort 2 to dinner! Arrive at 5:30. Botany continues!

FOR THOSE WHO STILL NEED THE REQUIRED BIRD WALK:

October 13: Bird Walk at New Quarter Park. 8 - 10 am. Leader will be our own Susan Powell.

October 20: Bird Walk/Field trip at York River State Park. 7 - 10 am. Leader will be Bill Williams from Williamsburg Bird Club.

Ten Certified Master Naturalists So Far

Patty Riddick, Membership Chair, reported at the last Board meeting that 10 members have achieved all requirements for certification as Master Naturalists: Kari Abbott, Anne-Marie Castellani, Tim Christensen, Shirley Devan, Alice Kopinitz, Seig Kopinitz, Clyde Marsteller, Larry Riddick, Patty Riddick, and Susan Powell.

Each has completed the required training, 8 hours of advanced training, and 40 hours of volunteer service. Congratulations to all!

CHAPTER OFFICERS

Kari Abbott, President

Susan Powell, Vice President & Programs Chair

Linda Cole, Secretary

Judy Hansen, Treasurer

Shirley Devan, Newsletter Editor

Anne Marie Castellani, Historian

Patty Riddick, Membership

Gary Hammer, Volunteer Service Projects

Clyde Marsteller, Advanced Training

Alice & Seig Kopinitz, Outreach Committee

Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster

Check Out Our Web Site



www.vmn-historicrivers.org

Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster, will be sending the magic passwords to Cohort 2 soon. He will start loading up Cohort 2 documents in the "Members Only" section this week. He works FAST so you'll be able to get to all released Cohort 2 training documents on line. Stay tuned to an email from Seig Kopinitz. Thanks for your patience.

HRC Tervis Tumblers

... will be available October 10 at the Pot Luck dinner. Bring cash or check -- \$15.00 each. They look great with the HRC and VMN logos!!

VIMS "After Hours" The Enchanted Sludge Forests of Surry County

Thursday, October 25,
2007

This lecture is approved for Advanced Training.



Wastewater from homes and workplaces was once released directly to rivers and streams, with dire environmental effects. Wastewater is now treated, a process that produces "biosolids," a witch's brew of nutrients and other substances increasingly used as fertilizer. Application of biosolids to fields and forests has been viewed as beneficial by some and reckless by others. Join Dr. Rob Hale as he explores the controversy surrounding biosolids and their potential health risks.

All lectures begin at 7:00 p.m. in McHugh Auditorium in Watermen's Hall on the VIMS campus at Gloucester Point. Reservations to this free public lecture series are required due to limited space. Register by calling 804-684-7846 or register online at: <http://tethys.vims.edu/events/registration.cfm>

Correction



Does this photo look familiar? Of course it does! It appeared in last month's newsletter. We learned from a local spider expert at Hampton University, Dr. Barbara Abraham, Associate Professor of Biology, that this is really a spiny orbweaver [not a crab spider!] Thanks, Barbara! Photo taken at New Quarter Park by Sara Lewis.

Schedule for Fall VMN Training Class

October, November, and December sessions for the Fall training class are listed below. Unless otherwise noted, classes begin promptly at 6:00 p.m. and end (for sure) by 9:00 p.m. **Note that our location will change October 24 to James City/Williamsburg Community Center (JCWCC) 5301 Longhill Road. Phone: 259-4200.**

Master Naturalists from the first class are welcome to sit in the classes, but the new trainees get seats around the tables. There are a limited number of Volunteer Service opportunities left for assistance with this training. See page 4 for details.

October 10: Botany (pot-luck dinner from 5:30 - 7:00; class from 7:00 - 9:00); Dr. Donna Ware

October 17: Entomology; Instructor Dr. Bill Dimock

October 24: Ornithology; Instructor Bill Williams, Director of Education for the W&M Center for Conservation Biology. *Beginning with this class, we'll be meeting at the James City/Williamsburg Community Center (JCWCC), 5301 Longhill Road. Phone 259-4200*

October 27: Saturday Field Trip to Forestry Center in New Kent County, Tentative time: 10:00 - 2:00; Instructor Billy Apperson

October 31: no class -- Halloween!

November 3: All day Saturday Field Trip to VIMS for Estuary and Coastal Ecology and Aquatic Ecology; Instructors will be VIMS staff

November 7: Herpetology; Instructor Tim Christensen, Member of Historic Rivers Chapter of VMN and member of VA Herpetology Society

November 14: Mammalogy; Instructor Bo Baker, VA Living Museum

November 21: no class -- Thanksgiving Eve

November 28: Ichthyology; Instructor Bob Greenlee, VA DGIF Fisheries Biologist

December 5: Ecology; Instructor Dr. Lou Verner, VA DGIF

December 12: Holiday Get Together with Stephen Living, VA DGIF. We will have a short "Annual Meeting" as required by our By-Laws at some point in the evening. Families are welcome to join us at JCWCC. We have arranged for our dinner to be catered and delivered by California Tortilla. More details later!

Estuaries Days at York River State Park

By Linda Cole, Project Coordinator, and Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

Estuaries Day began in 1988 as part of Coast Weeks and has grown into a national campaign to educate the public on the importance of estuaries and the need to protect this vital natural resource. Held the last Saturday in September, National Estuaries Day is a celebration of the Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary. Estuaries are those diverse and fragile habitats where freshwater from rivers, streams, and creeks mixes with saltwater from the sea.

The Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program joined with York River State Park and the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Virginia by engaging students of all ages in activities designed to stimulate an interest in estuaries and a desire to protect them.



A display board illustrated the importance of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program in recruiting volunteers in education, citizen science, and natural resource stewardship. Clyde Marsteller, shown above, fascinated everyone with his traveling Zoo in My Luggage display of toads, worm snakes, spiders, beetles, and all things cool and crawling. An artifact exhibit that included animal tracks and scat, a snakeskin, a bald-faced hornet nest, a Carolina wren nest with cowbird interloper, white-tailed deer antler, and animal skulls demonstrated the simplicity of identifying backyard wildlife.

Larry and Patty Riddick and Sheila Kerr-Jones also represented the Virginia Living Museum with live displays of black rat snake, Eastern box turtle, horseshoe crab, and Eastern screech owl. Chapter members assisted Park personnel on kayak and canoe trips, hikes, and hayrides.

This first outreach effort by the Chapter was a tremendous success reaching 74 adults and 64 children. Seven people asked about information on Cohort III (yes, Cohort III starting February 2008), two people requested information on the Chapter's

speakers-bureau, and one person indicated an interest in presenting to the Chapter.



Susan Powell in her Kayak at Estuaries Day

What seemed to many to be effortless would not have happened without the hard work and dedication of the Estuaries Day Committee: Linda Cole, Sheila Kerr-Jones, Ann Lipp, Susan Powell, Patty Riddick, Larry Riddick, and Angela Scott. Of course, effective outreach was possible only because of our Estuaries Day ambassadors: Cherie Aukland, Christie Bartels, Jim Booth, Anne-Marie Castellani, Judy Hansen, Pembroke Hoffmier, Tom Hoffmier, Laurie Houghland, Jerry Moum, Larry Robertshaw, Jordan Westenhaver. In addition, a special "thank you" is due to those who contributed "behind the scenes": Kari Abbott, Tim Christensen, and Mike Powell.

More information on National Estuaries Day is available at

<http://www.estuaries.gov/welcome.html>, on the Chesapeake Bay Reserve at <http://www.vims.edu/cbnerr/>, and on the National Reserve at <http://www.nerrs.noaa.gov/welcome.html>.

Save These Dates

October 12, 19, 25: The 31st Annual Fall Forest & Wildlife Field Tours

This is approved for Advanced Training.

Sponsored by The Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program and Virginia Cooperative Extension, these tours promote wise resource management on private forest lands. Each date is a full day bus tour and fees are \$40 per person.

October 12: Albemarle County Tour.

October 19: Prince George/Surry County Tour.

October 25: Frederick County Tour.

Registration is required. The following web site has all the details:

http://www.cnr.vt.edu/forestupdate/calendar/bus_2007.pdf

October 20, Jamestown Island Native Plant Walk

Saturday, October 20, 9:00 am - 12:00 noon

This is approved for Advanced Training.

This event is sponsored by the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. Tall, charismatic grasses will be featured on this foray to Jamestown Island (Historic Jamestowne, not Jamestown Settlement). The trip will include Black Point, the portion of the island first sighted by the colonists, and comments on tree species reported by Captain John Smith. Species of interest include northern wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*), big cordgrass (*Spartina cynosuroides*), gama grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*), plume grass (*Saccharum giganteum*), cherry-bark oak (*Quercus pagoda*), red bay (*Persea palustris*), and mosquito fern (*Azolla caroliniana*). Botanist Donna Ware will lead the walk. Open to the public. Please bring your National Park Service pass, if you have one, and register in advance to get meeting location. (757) 565-0657. Web site:

www.claytonvnps.org

October 23, Project WILD

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. -- FREE!

4-H Center, just off Centerville Road

This is approved for 6 hours Advanced Training.

Project WILD is a national accredited environmental educational curriculum that can be adapted to highlight Virginia's natural resources and used to created interpretive programs in parks. Kari Abbott, Project Learning Tree Facilitator, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, is a graduate of the University of North Carolina. Mrs. Abbott has volunteered over 3000 hours to the education and enlightenment of the school children of James City County over the past two years. Mrs. Abbott has been trained by both Project Learning Tree and Project WILD. She is the VA State Project Learning Tree Environmental Educator of the Year for 2007 and a National Project Learning Tree Outstanding Educator Honoree for 2007.

Project WILD's mission is to provide wildlife-based conservation and environmental education that fosters responsible actions toward wildlife and related natural resources. The goal is to assist learners of any age in developing awareness, knowledge, skills and commitment to result in informed decisions, responsible behavior and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment. To register, go to:

<https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1190736157450>

October 26, OLD GROWTH FOREST FIELD TRIP

10:00* am - 12 noon*; Limited to 20 participants

This is approved for Advanced Training.

This trip is sponsored by the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Mark your calendars to see the giant trees in the Cypress Bridge area near Courtland, Virginia. Byron Carmean, the veteran big-tree hunter, agreed to lead this trip to the area of 2,000 year old trees, some as large as 12 feet in diameter.

If the water levels stay low, the canoe ride to the big trees is only 150 yards, and Byron can ferry 2-3 people across and back. Bring your own boat if you want to do further exploration of the habitat. There is some walking through the swampy (dry now, says Byron) areas, so wear old shoes that could get muddy. Byron says that with the drought, there are no mosquitoes, and he has not had problems with chiggers or ticks.

The group will meet Byron at his home near Chuckatuck at 10 am, and it's another 45 minutes to the site. Plan on a couple of hours among the big trees; bring your lunch.

Please register in advance by calling Helen in Williamsburg, (757) 564-4494, Limit: 20 participants.

*Helen will be arranging carpools among the registrants. It takes about 2 hours to get to Byron's house (Suffolk area) from Williamsburg. So plan accordingly when setting up carpool meeting times. Web site: www.claytonvnps.org

October 30, Project Learning Tree

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. -- FREE!

4-H Center, just off Centerville Road

This is approved for 6 hours Advanced Training.

Project Learning Tree is a nationally accredited environmental educational curriculum that can be used to create interpretive programs in Park settings. Kari Abbott, Project Learning Tree Facilitator, Master Gardener, and Master Naturalist, will lead this session. PLT, a program of the American Forest Foundation, is one of the most widely used environmental education programs in the U.S. The curriculum materials provide the tools educators need to bring the environment into the classroom and their students into the environment. Topics range from forests, wildlife, and water, to community planning, waste management and energy. To register, go to:

<https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1190736657389>

November 3, "Walk and Talk," New Quarter Park.

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

This is approved for Advanced Training.

Dr. Jerre Johnson will lead a walk around the park and explore and explain the Geology of Virginia's Coastal Plain. Walk begins at 10 am.

November 3, Colonial Williamsburg Native Tree and Shrub Walk

10:00 am - 12:00 noon; Limited to 15 people.

This is approved for Advanced Training.

This walk is sponsored by the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. Landscape architect Phillip Merritt will lead a native tree and shrub walk through the historic streets and gardens of Colonial Williamsburg. This 300 acre museum is a beautiful early example of the use of native shrubs, trees, and perennials in landscape design. Colonial Williamsburg Admission tickets or Good Neighbor passes are required to enter the Gardens -- be sure to bring one or the other. Limited to 15 people. Please register in advance to get meeting location at (757) 259-0386. Web site: www.claytonvnps.org

[This walk is not affiliated with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.]

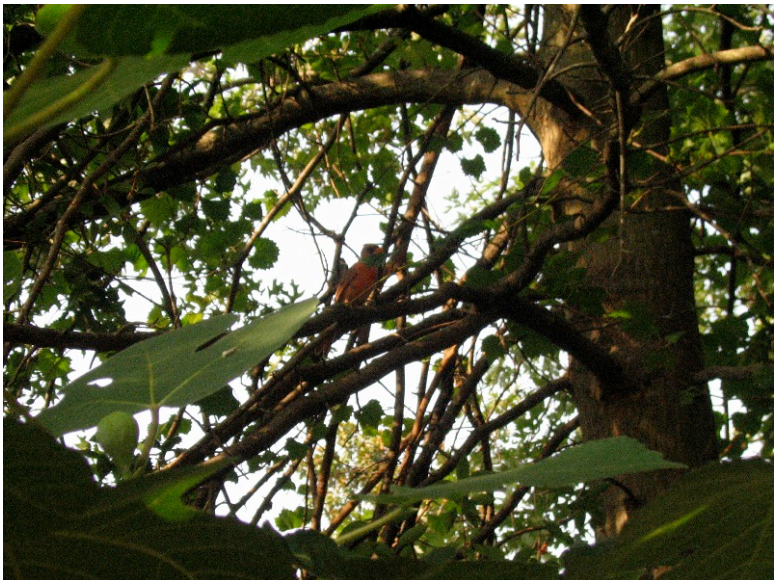
December 1, "Walk and Talk," New Quarter Park.

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

This is approved for Advanced Training.

Guest Speaker is Stephen Living, DGIF Watchable Wildlife Specialist. Topic is "Watchable Wildlife" in New Quarter Park." The park will also be celebrating the addition of the park to the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail.

*Can you find the Northern Cardinal in the foliage?
Thanks to Kathi Mesteyer for this great photo.*



Volunteer Service Projects

Our board has a goal of having each member of Cohort 1 become certified before the end of 2007. That means eight hours of Advanced Training and 40 hours of Volunteer Service. Look for a list of Advanced Training opportunities elsewhere in this newsletter. Meanwhile, listed below are the Volunteer Service Projects already approved. Feel free to contact the "go to" person listed for each event and find out how you can join in and earn those hours.

Assistance with Fall Cohort Training

Members of Cohort 1 can earn volunteer service hours by assisting in classroom management during the Fall class session for Cohort 2. You can earn two hours per session with a max of two people earning hours each class. We still need one volunteer for the following dates: October 17 – Entomology; and October 24 – Ornithology, and December 12 Holiday Event. Duties include taking class notes, classroom set up and tear down, distributing materials, collecting materials, and being warm, welcoming hosts! Contact Shirley Devan, sedevan52@cox.net

Greensprings Trail Wildlife Mapping and Interpretation

Contact Susan Powell or Kari Abbott to get in on the Interpretive role here. Also let them know if you would like to be involved in wildlife mapping for this area. Contact info: Susan Powell, vice-president@vmn-historicrivers.org or Kari, president@vmn-historicrivers.org

Trail & Garden Maintenance, York River State Park

This is an ongoing service project you can do any-time. Organized days are Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons, but you can go out any time. Contact Mary Apperson at the Park, phone 566-3036 or email: Mary.Apperson@dcr.virginia.gov



Alice and Seig Kopinitz along with Mary Apperson work to clear a trail at York River St Park.

Giant Oil Refinery Property Wildlife Mapping and Interpretation

Contact Patty Riddick to get more info on the logistics for this location. It will be helpful if you've had the Wildlife Mapping course. Contact info: Patty Riddick, pattyridnick@cox.net

Big Tree Project

Dr. Jeff Kirwan from VA Tech trained Cohort 1 in August to measure big trees. Most "big trees" in this area have teams scheduled to measure them. Contact Larry Riddick, Project Coordinator, to see if he has any new listings or needs assistance. This project must be completed before November 30. Contact info: Larry Riddick, larryridnick@cox.net

Williamsburg Land Conservancy Wildlife Mapping

We're still working out details and logistics for this project. We're looking for a project coordinator so contact Kari Abbott if you want to be in on this effort. Wildlife Mapping course is required.

Project Toolbox [Master Naturalist in a Box!]

A collection of field guides, books, and other local information to assist any Master Naturalist who is out in the field in an interpretive capacity [Greensprings Trail comes to mind!!]. Contact Larry Riddick to help complete this important cog in our contact with the public, larryridnick@cox.net

Master Naturalist Resources at Williamsburg Libraries

By Anne-Marie Castellani, Historian, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

There are currently 19 books at the Williamsburg Regional Library that are on the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists' resource list or were recommended during a class meeting. To find a list of these titles in the library's catalog, just do a [series search](#) and type in Virginia Master Naturalist resource list. This should bring up the list of titles from which you can check on the books' availability and location in the libraries.

Measuring the Big Trees on Campus

By Shirley Devan, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

Between the three of us, we had two "Big Trees" to measure. Ann Lipp and Linda Cole had to find and measure an *Acer davidi*. Linda and I had to find and measure a *Quercus chenil*. Both were on the William and Mary campus. Neither is a native.

Part scavenger hunt, part citizen science, the Big Tree Project our Chapter has undertaken for the "Virginia Big Tree Database" is specifically designed to update data on trees in our area that have not been measured since 1988. If not measured before the end of October, these trees will drop out of the database and will no longer be "big trees" in the eyes of Virginia Tech and the "Big Tree Database."

With only a month left to accomplish our mission and armed with a tree measurer's tools – a clinometer, a GPS locator, and a VERY LONG tape measure, we three drove to campus September 28 to look for our trees and measure them. The project required that we measure the circumference, the height, and the crown. Using these numbers we calculate the "points" for the tree.

The *Acer davidi* (common name Maple) was near Madison Hall. None of us knew where Madison Hall was but the photo of the tree that Linda had found on the web site showed the football stadium in the background. Ann checked the sign on the dorm and a couple of undergraduates confirmed when we were next to Madison Hall. The maple was right where it was supposed to be, but it was a shadow of its former 1988 self. The tree looked like it had been ripped apart by a wind storm many years ago. The trunk was hollow but the branches still had beautiful golden-tipped green leaves.



Ann Lipp and Linda Cole measuring the *Acer davidi* on William and Mary's campus.

So we set about to measure the tree. The circumference – easy to measure – had been 53" in 1988. Our measurement was only 44 inches. The height in 1988 had been 28 feet. Now it was only 19 feet. The clinometer is the tool used to measure the height. We had to call technical support for a refresher on how to use the clinometer. Luckily, Larry Riddick, Project Coordinator for the chapter and tree steward, was available and refreshed our memories over Linda's cell phone – set on "speaker" mode!! Each of us took our hand at measuring the height and arrived at the same number. We verified it using the "friend, stick, and pencil method" -- the low tech alternative!

With the hollow trunk, the tree seems to be slowly dying. A sobering thought for the three of us, but at least it had not succumbed to the bulldozer and campus construction. In its location about 20 feet from the dorm wall, it is likely to die in its own home.

We set off to find and measure our next tree – an oak tree "near the junction of two sidewalks leading from the rear of Dawson and NE of Bryan Hall." There was no sign on Dawson Hall but a map near the dorm confirmed the location of Dawson and we found the "junction of two sidewalks." Lo and behold, our tree was a monster oak that had done nothing but GROW in the past 20 years.

The *Quercus chenil* (no common name known) had grown from a circumference of 42" in 1988 to 108" in 2007. The tree had shot up from 45' to 70' tall. The crown spread was now 65', almost twice the 36' in 1988. Even though it is not likely a "national champion," it was a monster tree to us and we embraced it as "our tree."

Felice Bond and I have signed up to measure the "coast redwood," also on the William and Mary campus. Even though Felice was not with us this day, we three set out to find the tree described as "adjacent to James Blair building on campus of William and Mary College." We found it right away. In fact, there are two coast redwoods right next to each other. In October, Felice and I will measure these and report the results in the next newsletter. Stay tuned for that.



“Tree Huggers” Linda Cole and Shirley Devan embrace the *Quercus chenil* at William and Mary.

Ann, Linda, and I adjourned to the College Deli for lunch with a sense of satisfaction. We had successfully found and measured two trees. We felt like we had established a personal connection with “our” trees. Because of our efforts, they will remain in the “Virginia Big Tree Database” and William and Mary staff is now aware that they have at least two valuable “big trees” on campus. With this knowledge, we trust they will protect them in the coming years. But the three of us will be driving by every now and then to check on “our” trees.

Treasured Island

By Clyde Marsteller, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member and Major, Medical Service Corps, US Army (retired)

The Army sent me to St Mary’s University at San Antonio from 1966 to 1968 to complete my degree. There were nine sergeants (E6s & E7s) so selected.

Brother Tom Treadway the University’s Registrar (it was a Marionist school) called us his Army Retreads. It was our hope to become Mustangs and seven of us succeeded. What is a Mustang? I’ll leave that for you to find out. There are two of us in Cohort 1.

During our time at University we “adopted” an Air Force dependent – Pete R. He was the husband of an Air Force nurse at Lackland USAF base. Pete was 6’2” and a Polish Yankee from Vergennes, Vt with a sense of humor that had to be experienced. The group also included two of my very best friends one of them SSG Jim D. had met and married a gal from

Trinity University who was a member of an old Texas family, the Hawes. It was through Mary Pearl that we were introduced to Matagorda Island. The Hawes family was one of three families that had settled the island and they still maintained a small ranch on it next to the Matagorda Air Force Station on the northern end of the island. We soon found out we could travel to the town of Sea Drift, catch the 8am launch to the base and return on the 6pm launch. Once on the island we would walk to the Army Hole and fish all day.

The first part of this story starts when Pete and I drove down to Sea Drift on a Saturday. We boarded the launch and half way over we signed in on their roster. I signed in as an active duty Army SSG and Pete signed in as a dependent. When the Steward found out Pete was a dependent he immediately called ahead to the base. It seems that the week before several teenage dependents had gotten drunk on the island and had trashed the base’s Day Room. The C.O. had issued an order barring dependents from the island until further notice. When we arrived, Pete was quarantined by the Air Police (APs) with drawn pistols. I could stay but he had to go back. Needless to say we spent the day fishing from the town’s seawall.

Now forward a month. Jim D. decided to host the Retreads on the island’s ranch over the 3 day Labor Day week-end. Six of us (to include Pete) were able to go. We arrived at Sea Drift loaded with food, beer, and fishing gear. Jim’s Uncle-in-Law, Cpt Hawes met us at the dock and welcomed us aboard his 60 foot shrimp trawler. As we motored across the San Antonio Bay he put his net into the water and after about half an hour he hauled it in and dropped the catch on the stern. It was a bounty of shrimp, fish, crustaceans, and a lot of creatures I didn’t recognize. We harvested about 100 lbs of bay shrimp 2- 3 inches long and a lot of bait fish and crabs. The gulls and terns formed a screeching cloud over and on us as we swept the stuff we didn’t want back into the water. When we landed at the family dock, we put our catch into a wire cage live well next to it.

Cpt Hawes gave us a two way radio and keys to the ranch jeep and told us to call if we got into trouble. Barring any he would pick us up Monday afternoon.

After getting situated at the ranch house we immediately drove back to the dock and filled up a bucket with bait and headed to the Army Hole. On the way over I noticed a number of wooden teepees about 6 to 8 foot tall in the brush. I asked Jim if he knew what they were. He said they were shelters for the quail. We stopped and walked up to one. Jim kicked it and a covey of quail exploded out of it. We had to be extremely careful walking off road because of the large number of Western Diamond Back Rattlesnakes that infested the island. We caught hundreds of “rat” red drum, speckled sea trout, southern flounder, whiting, and sea mullet during the next three days. Early on we decided boil and eat as

many shrimp as we could. We had shrimp and eggs for breakfast, cold shrimp for lunch, and barbecued shrimp for supper all washed down with copious quantities of Lone Star and Pearl beer.



Sunset on the island.

The first night we decided to fish at the dock. The sunset was spectacular. I remember laying on the dock after midnight and looking up. I have never seen stars like that. The Milky Way was splashed across the sky and every now and then a shooting star would fall across the canopy. It was a mystical experience. Then I noticed there were lights in the water! As schools of fish swam by or as we fought fish we hooked, the water flashed with luminescence. Between the sky and the sea it was a show I will never forget. To add to all of this beauty the night exploded with sound. Coyotes started to talk to one another and the gulls flew overhead in the darkness answering them.

The morning brought another wonder. I experienced my first sunrise over the Gulf. The horizon brightened and turned a fiery gold. The sun rose out of the Gulf of Mexico like a flower growing like Jack’s magic bean vine. It finally kissed the water good bye and rose in its’ glory. Now I understood Kipling’s poem, “and the sun rose like thunder out of China across the bay.”

The radio crackled and Cpt Hawes told us to drive over to the Gulf beach. He was flying his Cessna airplane and had spotted schools of “Bull” Redfish in the surf. He would circle over them and we would stop the jeep and cast our lines into the surf. We hooked into fish so big we couldn’t land them. They tore our lines like they were thread. We finally caught a 20 pounder and it was supper on the barbie that night. Another memory was the bobwhite quail that greeted us each morning. Every fence post had a little male “bobwhiting” his head off.

It turned out that Cpt Hawes was also Brigadier General Hawes, Texas Air National Guard. When the Base C.O. found out we were his guests at the ranch he sent a courier over and invited us to be his guests at the Officer’s Club. He sent a base pickup truck to ride in. Pete (the illegal dependent) stood up in the back clasping his hands in a victory sign every time he saw an AP. Revenge is a dish best eaten with shrimp and cold beer.