

# First Texas Volunteers (BB-35) Newsletter

## May 20, 2006

Donald H. Fischer, President  
May 20, 2006

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### In Memoriam Edward S. S. Morrison

The First Texas Volunteers lost a treasure this month with the passing of Ed Morrison. Ed, a founding father of FTV, was the acknowledged leader of this organization since the early 1980's, whether he was holding office or not, and he did for the majority of the time. Ed was our acclaimed expert on all matters *Texas*, and was our mentor in our individual efforts to learn the intricacies of the ship and its operational history.

With his bride, Alita, at Ed's side, the Morrisons were the "first couple" of the *Texas*. Each complimented the other and their partnership in volunteering kept this organization alive during the lean years, and fostered its renaissance in the late 1990s.

Personally, Ed was a kind and gentle man, quick to run to the assistance of all who had a need. Just as importantly, he was also our champion, promoting the cause of this great ship and our FTV, and vigorously defending our position whenever the need arose.

To paraphrase Voltaire, had Ed not existed, we would have had to invent him. He was that important to our mission and the Battleship *Texas*. We shall not see his like again.

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### The Spring, Hard Hat Tours Earn \$5,700.

Hard Hat Tours were conducted this Spring on March 18, April 29 and May 6, earning donations in the amount of \$5,700. All things considered, the tours could have been disappointing as weather kept the usual percentage home. Instead this success was indicative of a couple of points. Firstly, the slots were overbooked by about 10% to compensate for the probability of a like amount of "no shows". Secondly, due to an overwhelming demand for slots on the April 29<sup>th</sup> tour, an overflow tour on May 6 was created.

Finally, a separate, small special tour was included that same day, maximizing our potential donations.

Kudos to all who participated in these tours, Dennis Mitchell, Chuck Moore, Tom Scott, Tom Gillette, Steve Bostick, Andrew Bostick, Herb Powers, Stan Adams, Wesley Grace, Bob Lunsford, Neill Carlson, Bill Werzner, John Stock, Chris Kirkpatrick and Jonathan Croom.

May concludes our Hard Hat Tour season. We'll pick back up in October.

### Current Restoration Projects

The major projects for 2006 are progressing as follows:

Boiler Room #3. This project is well underway. Bill Richmond volunteered to "honcho" this project this year, and his appointment seems a natural extension of the hard work he has put into this project. Assisting Bill has been his daughter, Sarah, J. D. Oliver and Stan Adams, with additional help from Jimmie Gonzalez.

There is much to be done here, so check with Bill to see how you can assist in this project. While it's dirty work, results are recognized continuously. Ultimately, half of the entire room will be restored to provide a dramatic demonstration to our special tours of our ongoing efforts to restore the ship and why their support and donations are important.

Motor Whale Boat. Sharron Waszkiewicz is leading this project. Currently, much of the post World War II additions to the boat have been removed and we are down to the basics. While some rotten wood is still to be removed, the boat is about ready for fabrication of new parts and re-construction. If your expertise runs in boats or woodworking, please contact Sharron and give her and her team a hand.

Officers' Pantry. Chuck Moore has leading this project, but needs your help. At this time, much of

the compartment has been stripped, but more work in this is still to be completed. Detail work on the dish racks and dishwashing equipment is still to be accomplished. New doors for the reefers in the pantry are on order. Besides Chuck, who has spent many hours on this project, much work has also been accomplished by Steve Bostick, Chris Kirkpatrick, and Dennis Kwiecien.

John Stock has fabricated the various parts and restored the pantry's warming table. For those who have not yet seen it, it is an absolutely beautiful piece of work and will be a great addition to the project. Great job John!

Folks, this is your basic grunt work restoration project. Give Dennis Mitchell a call to pitch in.

## **The Ship, the Park, and Everything**

There really isn't much new to report on the prospective dry berthing of the ship. It can be said that this approach is recognized as the only viable option to saving the ship. The old concept of moving the ship to dry dock periodically has been scrapped permanently.

At this time efforts are underway by TPWD, BTF, and SJBA to identify sources of funds to perform the necessary work to build the berth and repair the ship. Currently some \$16 million has been earmarked for this work through some circuitous efforts by BTF. While this seems like a lot, it will take much, much more to realize the goal. Also, some 20% of matching funds must be identified and committed to realize those earmarked funds. This subject merits serious discussion in-house of what role FTV can or should play in such efforts.

On a more direct and happy note, the ship recently received another \$10,000 from the McArdle Foundation. Barry will be the arbiter of how these funds are to be used. It is probably a safe bet that much of these funds can be used in restoration efforts.

SJBA, which I have described as an extremely professional, cooperative, and yet focused group, has already performed extremely valuable service for the park. Several parcels of land have been acquired, ensuring no further encroachment or construction will intrude upon the battleground.

There have been some wrinkles. The San Jacinto Museum Association and BTF have expressed some concerns about how these three very disparate organizations can function together. There is a perceived threat that SJBA wants to "take over". Through the author's personal observation in working with SJBA this past year, this is not the case at all. During a recent advisory board meeting at the park, viewpoints from all parties were aired, and in many ways, the air was cleared, but parochial views held by all organizations will be difficult to overcome. Our job in all of this is to ensure we are good neighbors and colleagues to all who support the Battleship Texas and San Jacinto State Historic Site.

## **Travis LaGrone Resigns as BTF Executive Director**

On another note, Travis LaGrone, executive director of the Battleship Texas Foundation, resigned his position this past month. This was a surprise to everyone within BTF and came at a critical time. Travis gave of himself to BTF and had the Battleship *Texas's* well being always in mind. Join me in thanking Travis for all his hard work, and we wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.

## **Congratulations Sharron Waszkiewicz!**

This recognition should also not be overlooked. Sharron and her husband were volunteers in the restoration of old Southern Pacific steam locomotive No. 982. This locomotive is currently on display across from Minute Maid Park downtown. As you may recall, this is the same train that was sited at Hermann Park since 1957. For her efforts, Sharron was awarded a golden spike, pulled from the rails and ties from the Hermann Park site. The awards were given out at the dedication dinner held at the former Union Station, currently part of Minute Maid Park, on April 11. Congratulations on helping preserve another important part of Houston's past.

See you soon.