

# First Texas Volunteers (BB-35) Newsletter

## November 25, 2006

Donald H. Fischer, President  
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### Thanksgiving 2006

We have passed another year since our celebration of Thanksgiving last year. With the fighting in Iraq still raging, and with a full-blown civil war there in the offing, one wonders what we have to be thankful for. The forces of evil, embodied in the form of militant Islam, would destroy the futures of their fellow citizens and religious kin, and bring those same terrors to our shores. So, I think at this point we must focus on the dedication of all those Americans, here and abroad, sacrificing their own safety, the comforting arms of their families, and a piece of the time of their lives, protecting us from the unthinkable. God bless them and their families!

The problems we see facing us in the restoration and salvation of the *Texas*, serious as they are, pale in relationship. However, we must never lose sight of the mission before us. We have just as important a role in preserving an important part of our history and heritage right here at home.

As we pray for our national leaders to find a solution to the morass overseas, let us help our local and state leaders find the solutions to saving the *Texas*. I'm thankful for the dedication of the local and state TPWD professionals working within the system to save this fine ship. I'm thankful for the dedication of those members of the Battleship Texas Foundation and San Jacinto Battleground Association, who have given so much of themselves in doing the same and protecting the battleground, which is the centerpiece of the site. I'm personally thankful for being associated with such a group as FTV, not just the organization, but also each and every one of you as individuals. Thank you, and I look forward to working with you again in the coming year.

### Hard Hat Tours Return Producing Record Donations!

Hard Hat Tours for the 2006 – 2007 season began with an outstanding success on October 14. On that date

FTV received \$2,560 at the gate, plus an additional \$70 for deck plan sales, etc. for a total of \$2,630.00.

This was followed by a second record-breaker on November 18 with a tour bringing in \$2,865 at the gate (Two individuals donated \$100 each!), plus \$108 for deck plan sales. In addition, our own Nancy Vernau presented a check for \$100 in honor of her dad's visit to the ship on November 4. (If you don't know, her dad is a *Texas* veteran. James Staub Gunst, Sr. served as a junior officer in the navigation and gunnery divisions in 1945 - 46.) In all, FTV earned \$3,073.00 for the November tours.

For all of you, who participated in these great events in whatever form, well done!

### Next Hard Hat Tours, January 20, 2007

Our next Hard Hat Tours will be conducted on Saturday, January 20. At this time, plenty of spaces are available for visitors, so if you know of anyone who would like to participate, prompt them to reserve a slot now. History has shown that slots will go fast as we close on the tour date.

### Election of 2007 Officers

Officers for 2007 were elected during our Fall meeting held on November 4. The slate elected is:

President: Don Fischer  
Vice President, Restoration: Dennis Mitchell  
Vice President, Docents: Tom Scott  
Secretary: Alita Morrison  
Master at Arms: J. D. Oliver

Appointed again as acting Treasurer for 2007 is Chuck Moore.

Also, following some discussion on an area in which we collectively have identified as being weak, John and Gayla Stock have been appointed to be our

Volunteer Coordinators. They will be tasked with promoting our program and processing our new applicants and keeping an eye on their progress within FTV and that we will meet their needs and they become productive members of FTV.

## **Election to Battleship Texas Foundation**

Simply as a matter of information, it should be noted that your weary president of FTV has been elected to the board of BTF. As such, I hope to help in any way possible to promote and preserve this ship and assist FTV in its missions.

## **Current Status of Dry-Berthing**

Everyone should already know that the \$16 Million from TxDot was disapproved, so funding from elsewhere is now required. Barry Ward, the newly designated director of BTF believes that this will be acquired.

Here locally, the various groups associated with the park and ship have divergent views of what needs to be done to restore and protect each of the pieces concerned.

The San Jacinto Museum of History is steadfast in its desire to move toward restoring the ship as planned back in 1998 and have the new joint reception center erected roughly forward of the bow of the ship. This location would allow for only one building (hopefully able to be expanded upon) rather than having to spend finite dollars on two or more structures.

The Battleship Texas Foundation wishes to do likewise, but primarily to move quickly while the ship is still in a condition to be moved to a relatively close location while a new dry-berth is constructed.

The San Jacinto Battleground Association wishes to have the ship moved 2 or 3 hundred yards north so that more of the Texan camp can be restored. Also, it was argued that the location of the reception center should be located at the perimeter of the park so that it would not interfere with the interpretation of the battlefield.

Frankly, as the battlefield is the centerpiece of this site, (it was the battle that wrested Texas from Mexico and is one of the 100 most important battles in history) and ultimately are the reasons why the museum and the *Texas* are co-located, SJBA is correct in their

views. The battlefield should be restored and protected as closely as possible to its 1836 configuration.

That said, if it takes too long for appropriations to be earmarked and approved for studying and funding a new location and negatively impacting the safety of the ship, then we have no choice but to move ahead with the current plan. Also, the powers that be in Austin, either in TPWD or the legislature may tire of the infighting locally and decide that we, collectively, don't deserve the funding and we all lose. This we cannot allow. Therefore, my vote will always be for the ship.