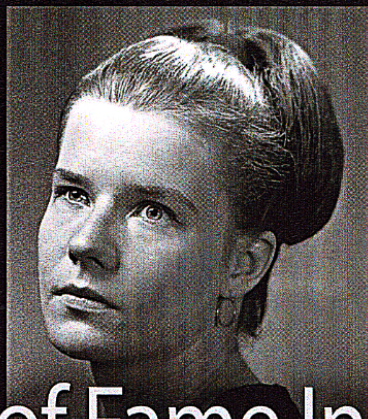
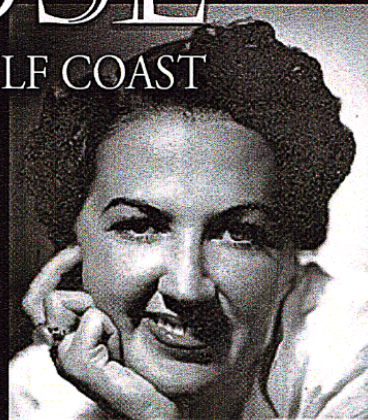
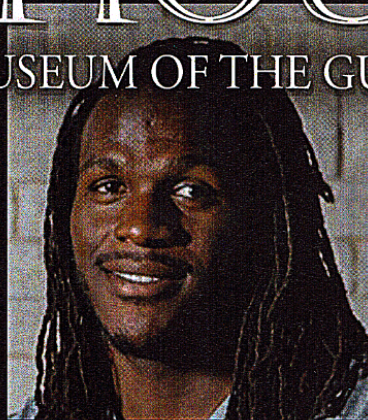
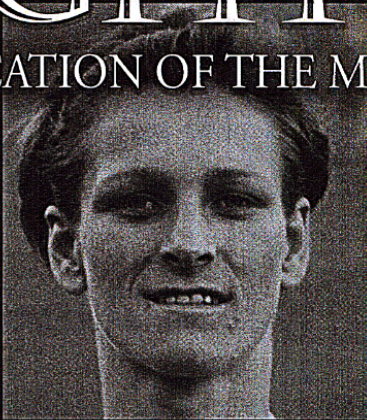
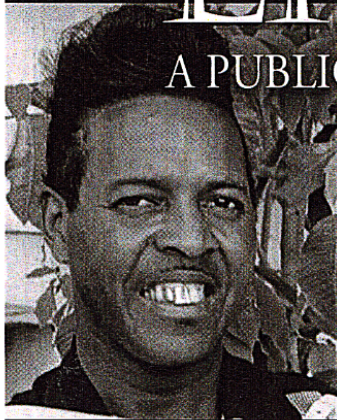
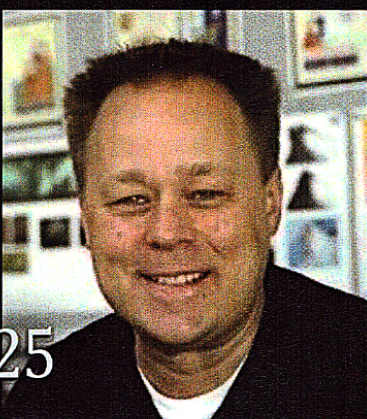
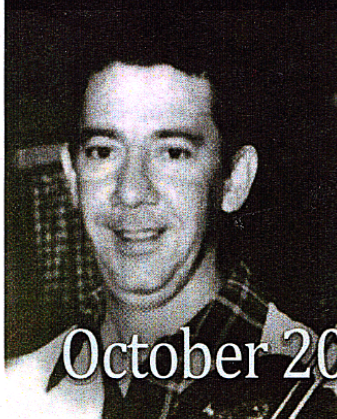
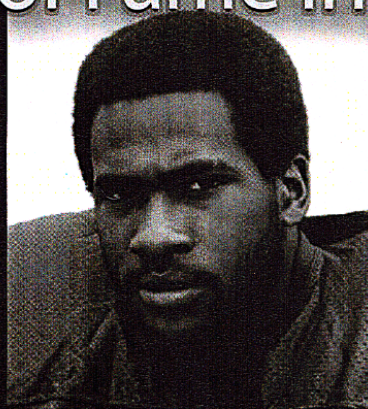
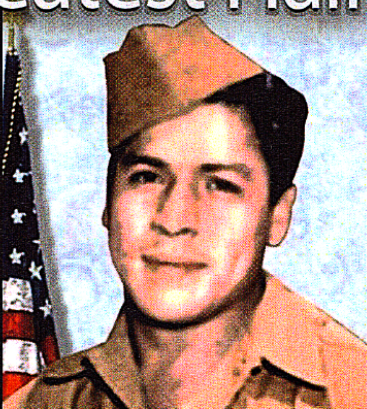
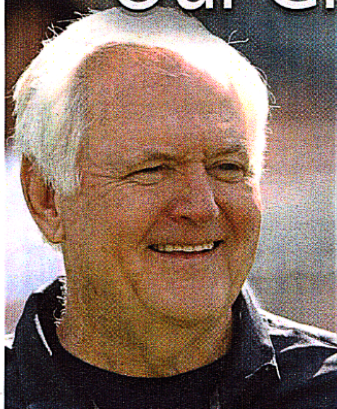


# THE LIGHTHOUSE

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GULF COAST



## Our Greatest Hall of Fame Inductees



October 2025



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October 2025

# CONTENTS



- 3 - from The Director
- 4 - Our Greatest Hall of Fame Inductees
- 6 - Sebastian Russo Joins Staff
- 9 - The Champions
- 10 - Memorials / Donations

Cover: Clifton Chenier, Babe Zaharias, Jamaal Charles, Leah Rhodes, Jimmy Johnson, Barbara Jacket, Janis Joplin, Mark Henry, Wade Phillips, Lucian Adams, Joe Washington, Robert Rauschenberg, Harry Choates, Kelly Asbury, Larry Graham, Barbara Lynn, Page 4 Header: Johnny Winter, Cherean Williams, Evelyn Keyes, James Gamble, J.P. Richardson

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**Jane Nielson VOLUNTEER:** Rachel Scott

## from The Director

We hear this question all the time: "So, what's so special about this area?" If you stop by the museum and ask, that's when the fun — and the learning — really begins!

One of our favorite things to do is work with the youth of our community, helping them discover just how amazing this place truly is. Our young people are encouraged to dream big, work hard, and accomplish great things — even when they don't always understand that they have so many local examples to follow.

That's where our Hall of Fame comes in! We're proud to share the stories of more than 271 Inductees in Notable People, Sports, Music, Art, and our newest Legacy category. These inspiring individuals show that you can succeed on a national and or even international stage — and still come from right here, the place we all call home.

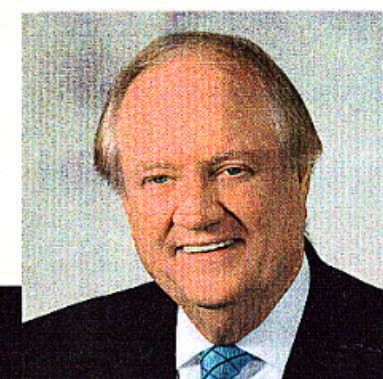
Sometimes young people feel like their opportunities are limited, but our message is simple: you're not on a dead-end street — you're standing on a launch pad of opportunity!

And that message isn't just for kids. Adults, too, can find inspiration when they take a moment to reflect on the incredible achievements and stories showcased at the museum.



So, in this issue — and the next time you visit — take a minute to explore what makes our area so special. Become a member, bring a friend, and help us to continue sharing these powerful stories with our community and the world.

We can't wait to see you soon!



Tom Neal



# OUR GREATEST HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

by Robert Fong



**Every person in the Museum of the Gulf Coast Halls of Fame is remarkable in their own discipline, but who among them stands above their own great peers? Who changed the course of music, greatly influenced other artists, or set an all-time record? Who are the very best of the best? (in no order)**

## GREATEST ROCK AND ROLL PERFORMER

**Janis Joplin** (Port Arthur - Singer) is considered by many to be the greatest female Rock and Roll performer and vocalist of all time. She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1995 and received a Grammy Award for lifetime achievement in 2005. In 2012, the U.S. Library of Congress added the album *Cheap Thrills* to the National Recording Registry. Her relevance as a cultural icon continues to grow and attracts thousands to the Museum of the Gulf Coast each year.

## RECORD-SETTING HIGH JUMPER

**Buddy Davis** (Nederland - High Jump, Basketball) was an Olympic gold medalist in the high jump. Davis set a record at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki with a leap of six feet, 8.32 inches. This was prior to the popularization of the Fosbury Flop at the 1968 Olympics.



## GREATEST FEMALE ATHLETE

**Babe Didrikson Zaharias** (Port Arthur, Beaumont - Track and Field, Golf) was the greatest female athlete of the 20th Century. She won a silver and two gold medals in the 1932 Olympics and set

four world records. Her early career began as a basketball player for the Employers Casualty Company. She is the only person to have ever medaled in the Olympics in separate running, throwing, and leaping events. She is also considered by some to be the LPGA's greatest golfer of all time, having won 82 tournaments, including 10 majors. She still holds the record for the furthest baseball thrown by a woman, at 296 feet, a record that is 93 years old. She was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2020.

## HIGHEST YARDS PER CARRY AVERAGE

Our nationwide infatuation with football distills our best athletes from over 26,000 high schools down to about 110 running backs for only 32 NFL teams. Of this elite cohort, **Jamaal Charles** (Port Arthur - Running Back) has the highest yards per carry average of any running back in the modern NFL era. Charles averaged an astounding 5.4 yards per carry over his entire professional career. And this was behind an ordinary offensive line: None were singled out as Pro-Bowlers during his entire career. To maintain the legitimacy of this record, a minimum of 500 carries is a commonly agreed-upon metric. Jamaal kept his average over 1,407 carries. Moreover, he is the all-time yards leader for any Kansas City Chiefs running back at 7,260. (remember Priest Holmes?) He is also tied with James Brown for the highest yards per carry average in one season at 6.4. Some were given the ball more, but when Charles touched the football, he gained more yards per carry than any other NFL running back ever has.

## HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL MEMOIRIST, POET, MENTOR

**Mary Karr's** (Groves - Poet, Writer) memoir *The Liars' Club* took the literary world by storm in 1995. Its lack of self-puffery and unsparing description of her family was unusual at the time, and hugely popular. Karr is credited with single-handedly launching a resurgence in the memoir genre, and *The Liars' Club* caused a spate of

copycat memoirs. As a poet, Karr won a 1989 Whiting Award and was a Guggenheim Fellow in poetry in 2005. She has received Pushcart prizes for both her poetry and essays. A recent article in *The Atlantic* singled out the best 25 poets of the 21st Century. (so far) Eleven are ex-students of Karr's, who is a Professor at Syracuse University.

## GREATEST FEMALE TRACK AND FIELD COACH

**Barbara Jacket** (Port Arthur - Track and Field) coached at Prairie View A&M for over 27 years. She was the women's track and field coach at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Her group of athletes, featuring Jackie Joyner Kersee, set a medal count for the USA women that was the best since 1956. She is arguably the greatest female track and field coach of all time.

## BEST COUNTRY SINGER

It would be difficult to single-out someone as the very best country vocalist, but when people make the attempt, **George Jones** (Colmesneil - Musician, Singer, Songwriter) is always in the conversation. Waylon Jennings once said, "If we all could sound like we wanted to, we'd all sound like George Jones." Jones had over 160 chart singles over the span of his career.



## GREATEST MONDAY NIGHT PERFORMANCE

**Joe Washington** (Port Arthur - Running Back), on a Monday night in September of 1978, threw for a touchdown, ran back a kickoff, and caught a touchdown pass. Howard Cosell declared it the greatest Monday night performance he had ever witnessed. He is still the only NFL player to accomplish the feat. Washington was an All-American in both high school and college. He won two National Championships with the Sooners and came in third in the Heisman balloting in 1974 and fifth in 1975. He was the fourth overall pick in the draft in 1976, and led the NFL in receptions in 1979. He also won a Super Bowl with the Washington Redskins.

## THE KING OF ZYDECO

**Clifton Chenier** (Port Arthur - Zydeco Musician, Singer) popularized Zydeco music. He is frequently credited with coining the term "Zydeco," and was instrumental in establishing Zydeco music as its own genre. He also invented the frottoir or rubboard. Chenier was the first zydeco musician to receive a Grammy in 1983 and

posthumously received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014. He is listed on the National Registry of Recordings twice. For these reasons, he is known as the "King of Zydeco."

## MOST INFLUENTIAL CAJUN MUSICIAN

**Harry Choates** (Port Arthur - Cajun Fiddler, Singer) was an early pioneer of Cajun music. His song "Jole Blon (Jolie Blonde)" was placed on the U.S. National Registry of recordings. Those lucky enough to see his performances say he was the best of all time. He introduced vocal wailing to Cajun Music, which is why he is often called "The Godfather of Cajun Music."

## GREATEST HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL COACH

**James Gamble** (Port Arthur - Basketball Coach), with 670 wins and four state championships, is one of the greatest Texas high school basketball coaches. He built Lincoln's basketball program from the ground up with students the football program did not want. His teams won the state title in 1981, 1984, 1986, and 1988. Gamble and his players also won 13 bi-district championships and 16 district championships. He is inducted into six Halls of Fame including the Texas High School Coaching Association Hall of Honor.

**The U. S. high school with the most Super Bowl participants is Port Arthur Lincoln with six players. Beaumont Westbrook is a close second with five.**

## GREATEST HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL COACH

**Todd Dodge** (Port Arthur - Football Coach) was a Texas Longhorn quarterback who helped defeat an 11th-ranked Auburn team led by Bo Jackson, but he will always be remembered for his stunning success as a high school coach. Dodge won four Texas 5A state titles (2002, 2004-2006), and three Texas 6A titles (2019-2021). He was twice named the nation's high school football coach of the year. In his next-to-last season, his Austin Westlake team defeated a team led by his son, Riley, at Southlake Carroll to win the 6A D2 State Championship.

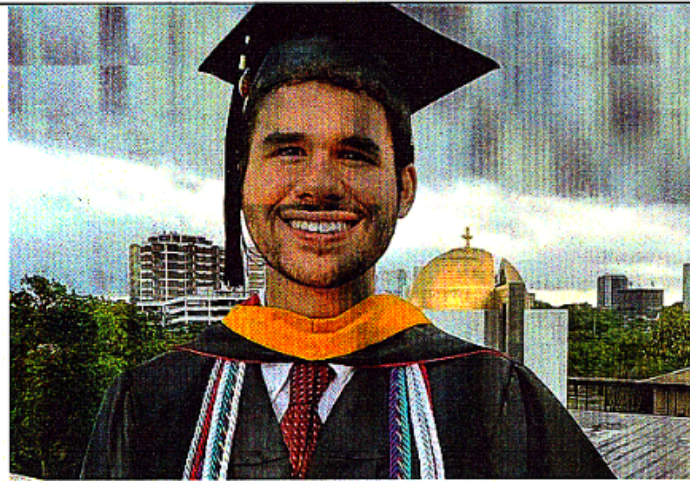
## THE GREATEST NCAA AND NFL COACH

**Jimmy Johnson** (Port Arthur - Football Coach) coached the Miami Hurricanes to a national championship before jumping to the NFL. As the head coach of the Dallas Cowboys, he retooled the worst team in the NFL to two Super Bowl titles in five short years. These accomplishments make him perhaps the greatest combined college and professional football coach of all time. (continued page 6)



# MUSEUM ADDS SEBASTIAN RUSSO TO STAFF

Sebastian Russo was hired in June as the Archivist & Curatorial Assistant at the Museum of the Gulf Coast. Following the retirement of curator Robert Fong, he has become the Interim Curator & Archivist. Before joining the Museum, Sebastian was the Site Manager and Curator at the Rosenberg Railroad Museum in Rosenberg, Texas, after volunteering there for several years. During his time in Rosenberg, he oversaw daily museum operations, curated exhibitions, managed artifact preservation, and collaborated with local organizations to promote Texas railroad heritage. Sebastian's professional interests center on Texas railroading history, a subject that has guided his career and personal research.



His fascination with the development of the state's rail networks and their influence on regional growth helped promote his move to Southeast Texas, where the Kansas City Southern Railroad played a pivotal role in shaping Port Arthur's early identity.

Sebastian earned his bachelor's degree in Computer Science with minors in History and Mathematics from the University of St. Thomas in Houston. In August, he completed his Master of Arts in History from Sam Houston State University, where his studies focused on Texas and industrial history.

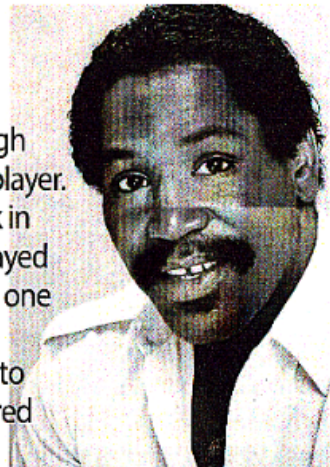
(continued from page 5)

## BOX OFFICE BEST

**Kelly Asbury** (Beaumont - Animation Director) directed many animated films, including *Shrek 2*. He also directed the first version of *Shrek* with the voice of Chris Farley. The film was 85% finished when Farley died. Asbury left the project before it was revoiced by Mike Meyers. The first credit at the end of *Shrek* is a thank you to Asbury. Asbury was subsequently asked to direct *Shrek 2*. When the animated sequel finished its theatrical run, it had grossed more dollars than any animated film in history, \$441 million domestically, and \$926 million worldwide.

## FIRST OVERALL PICK

**Bubba Smith** (Beaumont - Football) was a legendary high school and college football player. He was the number one pick in the NFL draft in 1967 and played in two Super Bowls, winning one of them. His larger than life persona catapulted Smith into motion pictures after he retired from the NFL.



## ACADEMY AWARD WINNER

**Leah Rhodes** (Port Arthur - Costumer) won the Academy Award for costuming the *The Adventures of Don Juan* in 1949. It was the second costuming Oscar awarded for a color film. Her Oscar is on permanent loan at the Museum of the Gulf Coast.

## LARGEST LITIGATED SETTLEMENT

When **Walter Umphrey** (Port Arthur - Attorney) and the team he assembled sued big tobacco, this group of tobacco companies had never lost a trial. The settlement in the case amounted to a record overall amount of over 17 billion dollars awarded to the state of Texas. Provost Umphrey as the lead and the four other Texas law firms will eventually receive 3.3 billion dollars in compensation.

## TRIPLE THREAT

**Barbara Lynn** (Beaumont - Singer, Composer, Guitar Player) was an extremely rare talent for her time. She is a black female songwriter, blues guitar player, and singer. Her #1 hit song, "You'll Lose a Good Thing" in 1963 launched her career. Her star continues to burn brightly. She now has 676,000 monthly listeners on the streaming platform Spotify. In 2018, she was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship by the National

(continued next page)

Endowment for the Arts, our nation's highest honor for folk and traditional artists.

## NUMBER ONE HIT SONGS WRITTEN

**J.P. Richardson** - AKA "The Big Bobber" (Sabine Pass - DJ, Singer, Composer) was an astounding songwriter. Writing and performing a hit record is like finding a golden goose. One hit song can make a career. The Big Bopper wrote three number-one hits: "Chantilly Lace" for himself, "White Lightning" for George Jones, and "Running Bear" for Johnny Preston. All three songs launched the careers of the singers.

## FASTEST PILOT

**Major General Harold Collins** (Port Arthur - Pilot) set a world speed record (707.889 mph), piloting a North American F-86-D Sabre Jet, and became the first American to fly a Russian-built MiG-15. Over his career, he logged more than 6,000 flying hours in over 140 different aircraft.

**Three Southeast Texas women have had their lives dramatized in feature films - Janis Joplin, Karen Silkwood, and Babe Zaharias. Inductee Kate Pate Walker's WWII Battalion was made famous by a recent Netflix release.**

## HIGHEST HONOR

**Lucian Adams** (Port Arthur - WWII Army Staff Sergeant) is one of only 473 men who received the Congressional Medal of Honor in WWII. 16.1 million Americans served in the war. His company was attempting to reopen the supply line to the Third Battalion in France, which had become isolated. After progressing only 10 yards under heavy machine gun fire, Adams (unassisted) charged the Germans' positions. He single-handedly took out nine soldiers, eliminated three enemy machine guns, vanquished a specialized force that was armed with automatic weapons and grenade launchers, and reopened the severed supply lines to the battalion.

## FIRST SPACE SHUTTLE PILOT

**Bob Crippen** (Beaumont - Astronaut) is one of only 360 astronaut candidates chosen by NASA. He was the first pilot of the first Space Shuttle Mission. He guided the space shuttle Columbia to a runway landing after it had orbited the Earth - a first for any vehicle and any pilot.

**MOST OUTSTANDING FEMALE SPORTS JOURNALIST Charean Williams** (Beaumont - Sports Journalist) is the first female to receive the Bill Nunn Award by the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The award and her name are displayed in the journalism wing of the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. She is also the first female journalist chosen as a Pro Football Hall of Fame selector and the first female president of the Pro Football Writers of America.

## PIONEER VISUAL ARTIST

**Robert Rauschenberg's** (Port Arthur - Visual Artist) pioneering work influenced a generation of artists and artistic movements, including Pop Art, Minimalism, Performance Art, and Conceptual Art. He is on a very short list of America's most influential artists of the 20th Century. He designed five *Time Magazine* covers and appeared on the cover of one. His *Buffalo II* painting is on a Wikipedia list of the 100 most expensive pieces of art ever sold at 71st. Adjusted for inflation, it is listed as having sold for 109 million dollars. He was the recipient of the National Medal of Arts in 1993.

## ALL TIME BIGGEST BOX OFFICE STARS

**Evelyn Keyes** (Port Arthur - Actress) starred as Scarlet's younger sister, Sue Ellen, in *Gone With the Wind*. Adjusted for inflation, this film remains the highest-grossing movie of all time.

## Frances Fisher

(Orange - Actress) is known for her role as Ruth DeWitt Bukater (Rose's mother) in the movie *Titanic*. Adjusted for inflation, it is listed as the number 3 highest-grossing movie of all time.



## BEST BASS PLAYER

**Larry Graham** (Beaumont - Bass Player) played bass guitar for Sly and the Family Stone. He pioneered a now commonly used playing method called slap bass, developed when his mom grew tired of paying drummers. He played on two recordings, "Every Day" and "Family Affair" on the *Rolling Stone's* top 500 songs list.

## MOST WEIGHT LIFTED

**Mark Henry** (Silsbee - Weightlifter) holds the largest raw squat and raw powerlifting totals ever performed by a drug-tested athlete, regardless of weight class, and the highest raw dead lift by an American citizen.



**GREATEST DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR, 2000-2025**  
**Wade Phillips** was named the greatest NFL defensive coordinator of the quarter century by ESPN. His 2015 defense with the Denver Broncos made perhaps the greatest playoff run of all time - holding Ben Roethlisberger and Tom Brady to 16 and 18 points, respectively. In the Super Bowl, that season's NFL player of the year, Cam Newton, was limited to just 10 points. Phillips' 2018 Rams' defense held Tom Brady and the New England Patriots to 13 points in Super Bowl 53, but the McVay-coached offense was only able to score 9 points. He has repeatedly taken over failing NFL defenses and coached them into playoff-ready units in only one season. Phillips has coached five players who were awarded Defensive Player of the Year titles under his tutelage.

#### GREATEST CHRISTMAS BLUES COMPOSER

**Charles Brown** (Texas City - Composer, Keyboardist, Singer) is known for co-writing the classic holiday hit "Please Come Home for Christmas." The song appeared on the Christmas Singles chart for nine seasons, hitting number 1 in 1972. He was a recipient of a 1997 National Heritage Fellowship awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts, which is the highest honor in the folk and traditional arts in the United States. He is a multi-Grammy nominee and has won the Blues Music Award three times. Brown is a member of the Blues Hall of Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He also penned and performed "Merry Christmas, Baby."



#### MONSTER #1 COUNTRY HIT

**Don Rollins** (Beaumont - Composer) co-wrote the hit song "5 o'clock Somewhere" performed by both Alan Jackson and Jimmy Buffett. In 2003, it spent eight non-consecutive weeks at #1 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs, and ranked #4 on the year-end chart. It also won two Academy of Country Music awards for Single of the Year and Vocal Event of the Year. The recording became the #3 song of the decade on Hot Country Songs.

#### FURTHEST, FASTEST, LONGEST & LAST REMAINING RECORD OF OUR EXISTENCE

**Willie Johnson** (Beaumont - Composer, Guitar Player, Singer) performed for tips in downtown Beaumont. His

songs were recorded between 1927 and 1930. When NASA launched Voyagers 1 and 2 in 1977, a "Gold Record" was placed on the spacecrafts. The record was designed to last forever. Carl Sagan and a team of researchers were tasked with collecting a representation of the human experience here on Earth and sending it into space on the Voyager probes for other life forms in the universe. They included a Johnson song, "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground." That gold record might last many billions of years. Voyager 1 has left our solar system and maintains a velocity of 10.1 miles per second. It is now 20.9 billion miles from Earth, and still responds to messages, which, traveling at the speed of light, take 23 hours to reach the spacecraft.

#### AND THE REST

**Johnny Winter** (Beaumont - Guitarist, Composer, Singer) turns up as number 63 on the *Rolling Stone's* greatest guitarists of all time. **UGK's** (Port Arthur) song "International Player's Anthem" is on the current *Rolling Stone's* top 500 Song List at 91. **Jerry Levias** (Beaumont) was the first black player to receive a football scholarship in the Southwestern Conference. **Mark Chestnutt** (Beaumont) has recorded eight number-one hit records. **Tracy Byrd** (Vidor) received the award for single of the year from the Academy of Country Music in 1996, for his song, "Keeper of the Stars." **Tex Ritter** (Carthage, Beaumont) received an Academy Award for the song "The Ballad of High Noon" for the film *High Noon*. NFL Kicker, **Matt Bryant** (Bridge City) was the NFL scoring leader in 2016. **Tom Hicks** (Port Arthur) created at one time the largest radio broadcast corporation in the country with 400 stations. **Allan Shivers** (Port Arthur) graduated from Port Arthur High School in 1924. Twenty-one short years later, he was elected Governor of Texas.

## Thank you

*As members of the Museum are the primary readers of The Lighthouse, I wanted to conclude this issue with a short message. I am pleased to announce that I have retired. I want to thank Tom, Becky, Dana, Dr. Monroe, the volunteers, and the board for the privilege of working as the curator with such a wonderful and dedicated group of people. It was the opportunity of a lifetime, and I loved every minute of it. I will miss the museum and everyone involved. Donna and I have moved to the Austin area to be close to our two sons, and are looking forward to downshifting our pace of life. Please continue to support the Museum. It is an amazing place and well worth it. - Robert Fong*

# THE CHAMPIONS

*Of our many Hall of Fame Inductees, who among them have reached the pinnacle? Who are the special talents that willed themselves to greatness or led their teams to victory? Who are the Champions?*

U.S. Senior Golf Open - Bruce Lietzski

Canadian Football Hall of Fame - Don Narcisse (Grey Cup Champion, 1989). Garland Boyette (CFL Most Valuable Player, 1965)

Academy Award - Leah Rhodes, Tex Ritter

Pro Football Hall of Fame - Jimmy Johnson (Coach), Charean Williams (Sports Journalist)

Super Bowl Champion - Tim McKyer (3), Elandon Roberts (2), Jimmie Johnson (2), Bubba Smith, Wade Phillips, Joe Washington, Bobby Leopold, Aaron Brown, Eric Alexander, Louie Kelcher

NFL Rookie of the Year (1967), NFL Most Valuable Offensive Player (1967, 1968) - Mel Farr

World Series Champion - Ben Weber, Frank Robinson (MVP)

NBA Basketball Champion - Kendrick Perkins, Stephen Jackson, Luke Jackson

NCAA National Football Champion - Jamaal Charles, Jimmy Johnson (player & coach), Bobby Leopold, Steve Worster (2), Joe Washington (2), Eric Alexander

Grand National Motorcycle Champion - Carroll Resweber, 1958-1961

Heavyweight Champion - Jack Johnson (1908-1915)

Women's International Boxing Federation Champion - Valerie Mahfood (Light Heavyweight Title, Super Middleweight Title)

National Golden Gloves Champion - Wilford Scypion, Bubba Busceme (5), Morris Carona (2), Ronnie Shields (2), Paul Jorgenson, Dick Menchaca (2)

OLYMPIAN - Mildred "Babe" Didrickson Zaharias: Track and Field, 2 gold, 1 silver (4 records). Walter "Buddy" Davis: High Jump, Gold (1 Record). Luke Jackson: Basketball, Gold. Morris Carona: Boxing. Richard "Dick" Menchaca: Boxing. Sydney Bowman: Track and Field. Barbara Jacket: Track and Field Coach. Bubba Busceme: Boxing. Ronnie Shields: Boxing. Mark Henry: Weight Lifting (1992, 1996). Chanda Rubin: Tennis.

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame - Gatemouth Brown, Charles Brown, ZZ Top, Janis Joplin, Larry Graham, Cosimo Matassa

Country Music Hall of Fame - Tex Ritter, George Jones

Grammy Award Winner - Gatemouth Brown, George Jones, Robert Rauschenberg, Johnny Rivers (2), Tracy Byrd (2), Rodney Crowell (2), Cosimo Matassa, Don Rollins, Rockin' Sydney Simien, Joel Sonnier, B.J. Thomas (5), Wayne Touns, Edgar Winter, Johnny Winter

National Recording Registry of the United States: (currently stands at 676 entries)

*Crescent City Living Legends Collection* - Clifton Chenier and others

*Bogalusa Boogie* - Clifton Chenier

"Jole Blon (Jolie Blonde)" - Harry Choates

*Cheap Thrills* - Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company

"He Stopped Loving Her Today" - George Jones

"Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground" - Blind Willie Johnson

*Stand* - Larry Graham with Sly and the Family Stone

*Rolling Stone Magazine's* 500 Best Songs (2024):

"International Player's Anthem" (#91) - UGK

"Me and Bobby McGee" (#144) and "Piece of My Heart" (#435) - Janis Joplin

"He Stopped Loving Her Today" (#222) - George Jones

"Tighten Up" (#265) - Archie Bell and the Drells

Past versions included "La Grange" by ZZ Top, "Okie Dokie Stomp" by Gatemouth Brown, and "Frankenstein" by Edgar Winter Group. The list has been updated three times.



# Memorials

## ANGIE BOWERS

Becky Guidry  
Tom and Linda Neal

## GENE CALDWELL

Salvador and Pat Sierra  
Tom and Linda Neal

## MICHELLE FULLER

Lucille Armintor  
Becky Guidry  
Tom Neal  
Dr. Sam and Linda Monroe

## MADELON GOLDSMITH

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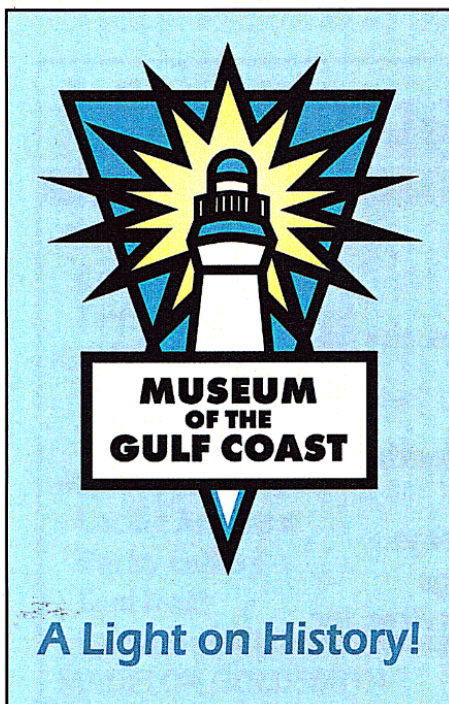
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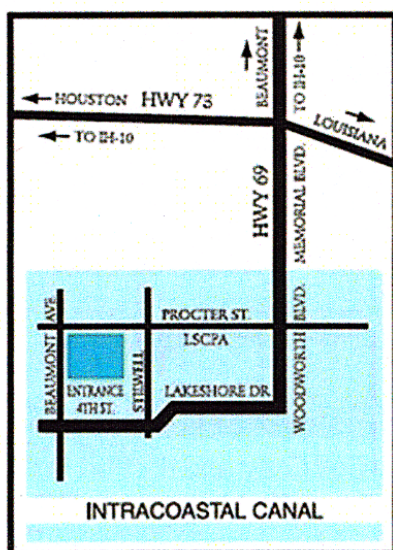
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