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To dredge or not to dredge Fish Pass

Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI — Silt has filled the once-popular Fish Pass on Mustang Island while a report on whether to re-dredge the inlet languishes in Austin, officials say.

Nueces County Commissioner J.P. Luby, whose precinct includes Mustang Island, says he doesn't believe the pass ever will be cleaned out.

"I don't see any hope of getting the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to dredge the pass," Luby says. "It will take cold, hard cash

now. I don't think the state has the money to do it now. I'm not sure you will ever see it dredged."

The pass, on the northern end of Mustang Island State Park, was popular with fishermen until sand cut off the flow of water between the Gulf and Corpus Christi Bay.

The study, completed last year, set a cost of about \$10 million for dredging, a bridge to allow fishing boats into the Gulf and other improvements.

In May 1984 Luby proposed that the pass be dredged of silt at no cost

to the state. He says a private company was willing to do the project in return for dredge spoil which could be used in island construction.

A \$50,000 feasibility study was commissioned in August 1984 by the Parks and Wildlife Department to determine if the pass should be opened and whether it should be opened to boats.

Luby says although the study by Goldston Engineering Co. of Corpus Christi was finished last spring, he didn't receive a copy until about a month ago.

The Fish Pass was dredged in

1972 at a cost of \$3 million. Officials say the pass was built in the place and that jetties into the pass weren't long enough to prevent silt from filling it.

"It probably will take \$750,000 to dredge now," Luby says. "The state threw a monkey wrench into the whole thing."

Luby says he was negotiating with the state to have free dredging at the pass for more than two years ago, before the pass was announced. He says fill dirt is no longer needed for construction projects on Mustang or North Padre lands.

Whittling

East Texas woodcarvers find creative outlet

Associated Press

GLADEWATER — At the age of 12, Virgil Miller would sit under the trees where hobos gathered near his home in El Dorado, Ark., and attempt to copy their whittling talents.

The hobos would whittle various articles and then sell them for a nickel apiece to raise money for food. Miller got so intrigued in whittling he had little interest in anything else.

Today, Miller is a semi-retired owner of a roofing company — and still whittling and carving.

Miller is one of the members of the East Texas Woodcarvers Club in Gladewater. His pieces generally revolve around a theme involving frontiers people, Indians or animals.

Miller will sculpt his piece in clay, and then carve the sculpture into wood. He prefers catalpa, basswood or mahogany because of their textures and grains.

He said the clay model could be used to make a bronze casting, but he considers the wood carvings to be more valuable than bronze pieces.

"Usually there are 25 or 30 pieces made when they cast bronze, but there is only one wood carving, so I think it is worth more," he said.

Miller, whose works show fine detail with the grain carefully integrated to accentuate details, prices his works between \$200 and \$18,000. The most he has ever been paid for a piece is \$2,200.

The \$18,000 work is several pieces and a three-dimensional reproduction of a painting called

"Captured" by the Western artist Frederick Remington.

The piece shows a captured U.S. Army soldier, stripped of clothing and obviously cold, sitting with his legs crossed some distance from a campfire. Meanwhile his Indian captors sit around the campfire, dressed in his clothing, waiting for him to freeze to death.

Jim Nelson, a Longview electrician, became interested in carving about six months ago, and has since practiced to the point where he has learned the skills of the art of working with wood.

He said he approached Miller and said he wanted to learn carving, and Miller "said he would teach me half of what he knows. Then he carved half of a face into a piece of wood and told me to bring it back when I had finished the other half," Nelson said.

He said wood carvers sometimes place high prices on their works because they become attached to them after working on them for hours at a time.

"I have got a \$700 Johnny Appleseed that I don't want to sell. But if someone comes along and wants to pay me \$700, maybe it's worth more to him than it is to me," he said.

"If you have spent two days or 1,000 hours carving on it, you become attached, and you really don't care whether it sells or not. What makes you feel good is when you take it to one of the shows and one of the oldtimers comes up and tells you that the piece looks good," Nelson said.

Charlie Winstead of Midlothian says he got started in wood carving about 3½ years ago as therapy after experiencing three heart attacks.

"I was retired at age 40 and sat around feeling sorry for myself," Winstead said. "I sat around the home by myself and started putting on weight. I went from 170 pounds to 245 pounds.

"One day my wife brought home a knife and a book by Harold Erlow, a well-know caricature carver. She thought she was helping me, but she never realized she was creating a monster," laughed Winstead, who is now trim and whittling caricatures so well that he goes to several shows a year and last year spent two weeks teaching a course on caricature carving in Eureka Springs, Ark.

"It's the greatest therapy there is," he said. "If someone is disabled it is a fantastic pastime. It may not be a masterpiece, and you may only be whittling a point on a stick, but you enjoy it."

Raymon North, a Dallas lawyer, said he had started carving as a youngster in the Boy Scouts, but had more or less dropped the habit until seven or eight years ago when he started again as a challenge.

North said he finds the hobby relaxing and that it gives him something to do when a client gets on the telephone and starts rambling on about his problems. North said he cradles the phone with his shoulder, and gets out his knife and his latest project.

Spanish sailor brought Texas crusading spirit

Associated Press

In 1528, the ill-fated Spanish expedition to "La Florida" was shipwrecked on the coast of Texas. This landing on the island of Malhado, most likely Galveston Island, marked the first recorded European intrusion on the present state of Texas.

Of about 300 Spaniards who survived, historian William G. Sumner, in his book "The Spanish in Texas," recounts, only four men eventually lived through sickness and encounters with hostile coastal Indians. These four, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, Andres Dorantes de Carranza, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, and Estevanico, a black slave of Dorantes, were among the Texas Indians who, nearly eight years later, traveled to the tribe, the four eventually made their way through the back to Spanish settlements on the east coast of New Spain, or what is now Mexico.

It was Cabeza de Vaca who perpetuated rumors of seven cities of gold on the frontier. Deeply intrigued, "New World," the desire to conquer, to gain wealth and power took root. And for more than three hundred years, Spanish, French and American adventurers traversed the unmapped lands of Texas searching for the wealth and power. Eventually these quests fueled the westward development of the North American frontier and the permanent settlements that resulted.

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