

It was an honor and privilege to serve at Faith Chapel

By Trish Clements

This is not about sour grapes. This is about apples and oranges and how attempting to compare them can become rather sticky. I would like to clarify some numbers that have been afloat without a rudder. Most islanders are aware of the many decades of volunteer service given to Faith Chapel by the five island churches. Each congregation took two months every year with the remaining two being filled by FOHJI members (which by and all were the same folks.) These dedicated volunteer sitters kept the Chapel open every afternoon from two to four dispensing Chapel history and allowing visitors to enjoy what I always felt was Jekyll's real jewel.

Many of the volunteers were quite knowledgeable regarding the Chapel history. Others depended on the big white docent book I prepared for their use years ago. As a retired tour guide I recalled the questions most posed by visitors so they were included in one big well-used book. There were certain guidelines used by all sitters. Greet visitors as they arrive and request

they sign the guest book upon leaving. Human nature seems to dictate that while on vacation you need not sign your name to anything not plastic. Unfortunately, I could not and would not count non-signers. But I did indeed count all those other signatures. On the last day of the month I collected those pages from the book and tallied. I was instructed to phone that one number into the director on the first of each month. Then I began noting the number of different states and foreign countries represented each month, so I began including this info to my monthly report along with the number of days open and the averages.

Sitters were instructed *not* to count the tram tours arriving during visiting hours. The sitter held the book on her/his lap until the tour group left. Two reasons for this: 1) those people had already been counted when they bought their ticket at the museum and 2) it would take up too much time waiting for 20 to 40 people to sign the book disrupting the tram schedule. Not counting those people was my idea and I don't regret it. It was simply the fair thing to do. No dou-

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ble dipping.

So, what's my point? How about fair and honest comparisons. We were open for only two hours daily. They are now open for eight. Our visitors were all walk-ins. They now arrive by the tram load. I have inquired about current pay-to-pray walk-ins but they seem to be lumped in with all others. No money was exchanged during our time; donations only. I always felt we would have taken in more had it not been so dark in the narthex where the donation box sat. I once suggested a clear plastic box might

increase donations but was informed plastic was not historical. However, it now seems to be OK for plastic in the form of credit cards.

Here are the actual figures: in 2015 we had a total of 7,584 visitors. We were open for two hours per day for 337 days for an average of 22.5 visitors daily. We averaged 36 states and 5.5 foreign countries per month. We are now informed 23,000 visitors passed through in 2017. The Chapel is now open for eight hours with a minimum of one person to collect money and interpret the interior and history. Trams now arrive throughout the day with another paid interpreter aboard. For decades the Chapel was kept open

with volunteer sitters. It was free labor. No one was ever paid. So maybe Wes Wolfe's description of a "dramatic turn," in the Apr. 18 edition of *The Brunswick News* isn't quite so dramatic after all.

I would like to one last time express my deep appreciation to all those faithful and dedicated sitters and to their coordinators: Mary Stock (Catholic), Dot Easterling (Baptist), Ame Ivanov (Presbyterian), Betty Murray (Episcopal), and myself for the Methodist and FOHJI. On Jan. 31, 2016, I locked the Chapel door for the final time. The last signature in the guest book belongs to Terry Dickson. It was the end of an era. And it was an honor and privilege.

SGHS Auxiliary names Billie Croft

Billie Croft of Jekyll Island was recently named Volunteer of the Quarter by the Southeast Georgia Health System Brunswick Campus Auxiliary.

Croft has volunteered with the Health System for 16 years and can be found in the Gift Shop every other Thursday. Like many of her fellow volunteers, Croft feels giving of herself is also a gift she gives to herself. She explains, "Sixteen years ago a friend of mine convinced me to fill out an application to volunteer in the Gift Shop. I had recently retired from teaching and was feeling a bit low. She thought it would be good for me. Well, she was right! Volunteering in the Gift Shop has been a great experience. I really enjoy helping our customers and making their day a little brighter. I've also become close friends with many of my fellow volunteers."

When she isn't volunteering at the Health System, she enjoys spending time with her husband, C.N. Croft, family and friends. Additionally, she likes a good game of mahjonnig. Croft is also the music director at Jekyll Island



Joyce Toler, left, president of the Brunswick Campus Auxiliary, and Billie Croft, Volunteer of the Quarter.

Baptist Church.

More than 300 volunteers generously share their time and talents to assist patients, visitors, and team members at the Southeast Georgia Health System Brunswick and Camden cam-

pus, as well as the Senior Care Centers in Brunswick and St. Marys. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, contact Volunteer Services at 912-466-3157 or visit sghs.org.

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