

# SHORE LINES

Newsletter of the North American Sea Glass Association

Fall 2006

Dear Members,

Greetings sea glass collectors and artisans. This is the inaugural issue of the Shore Lines newsletter from the **North American Sea Glass Festival**, which will take place in Santa Cruz, California, on October 7th and 8th, 2006. The festival will feature a "Shard of the Year" contest, lectures, and great fun!

Please read below for details, but also visit our website at [www.seaglassassociation.com](http://www.seaglassassociation.com). Happy beachcombing!

Charles Peden



## Sea Glass Festival 2006

### Saturday Oct 7

10:00 Member's Preview  
11:00 Festival Open to Public

#### Lectures

2:00 "Extreme Sea Glass Beachcombing"  
by Charles Peden  
3:00 "Sea Glass Identification, History and Tips"  
by Richard LaMotte

### Sunday Oct 8

11:00 Member's Festival Open to Public  
12:00-4:00 Shard of the Year Contest

#### Lectures

1:00 "Sea Glass in the Classroom"  
by Phil Nordin  
3:00 "Our Love Affair with Sea Glass"  
by Mary Beth Beuke

## A Tale of Two Beaches

by Richard LaMotte

Approaching Bermuda by air last spring on a quest for sea glass and relaxation, I was captivated by the vast expanse of white-roofed houses that dot the island landscape. The bright limestone-washed crowns grace the homes of the meek and the affluent with a graceful equality that seems echoed by the people that reside on this truly mid-Atlantic sanctuary.

In 2005, Bermuda celebrated its 500th birthday recognizing its alleged discovery by Spanish Captain Juan de Bermúdez who spied the island while homeward bound aboard the caravel La Garza. The broad outer reef that surrounds the island is so deceitful that its first inhabitants were actually said to be castaways from shipwrecks in the 1500s. The first claim to the island was made by Britain in the early 1600s. Shortly thereafter, the English rapidly inhabited Bermuda and began producing rum from distilled sugar cane.

The island of Bermuda was created by a tremendous volcanic outcropping that reaches three miles above

the ocean floor. The outer reefs that have frequently destroyed vessels also protect the island from the vicious waves of Atlantic hurricanes. Over the past five centuries, more than 400 shipwrecks have been identified surrounding the island. It is no wonder that Bermuda earned a reputation as the Devil's Island soon after its initial discovery.

The potential for finding glass artifacts in this historically rich region was so alluring that my wife and I decided a long weekend visit would be an ideal way to celebrate our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since packing a blue blazer and dark socks was not my idea of a vacation, we scoured the Internet to find accommodations off the highbrow tourist trail. On a hunch, we looked at Bermuda's western end where we found a casual retreat well away from the hustle of the more grandiose resorts. Once a secluded Canadian Air Force encampment, 9Beaches resort was just waking up from its winter break and preparing for its tourist season.



Our arrival in early May allowed us to select one of the oceanfront cabanas called “Top Bananas” facing west toward Daniel’s Island, a small uninhabited island roughly 200 yards away. We had all the comforts of home, but on windy nights the canvas walls sounded a bit like sails luffing in the breeze. For easterners, watching the sun set over the ocean is a treat, but the real surprise lay just below our cabana balcony.

We knew there was a shipwreck just off Daniel’s Island since the bow of the Vixen (1896) was still visible in the distance. What we did not expect was to find shards of black glass from the early 1700s in the shallow water next to our cabana. Though most were barely worn, the evidence of their age was irrefutable as shard after shard displayed definite characteristics of glass made from the 1700s to mid-1800s. As expected, there were a few modern shards strewn in, but the abundance of black glass was extraordinary. Several lip and neck shards from Dutch Onion-style wine bottles were found with openly flared lips that were not paddled flat, as produced from the 1720s onward. Several shards from Case Gin bottles were easy to identify, but one displayed its primitiveness with a unique pattern of “S” swirls on its outer surface along with large bubbles and irregularly thin walls. Crooked



bottle necks with applied lips were found on a brief snorkeling venture within whispering distance of our quarters. The only bottle found whole was a “hobble-skirt” Coca-Cola, circa 1955, from Elkins, West Virginia.

It was obvious that the cove where we found these shards had been well protected for hundreds of years. While this beach still faced the open ocean, the barrier reefs slowed pounding waves to a crawl. Here the glass artifacts rested in relative safety on soft coral sands and were only tumbled by occasional bumps into the jagged volcanic outcroppings along the shore.



Fortunately, before we left home, a friend had told us about a productive sea glass beach on the opposite side of Bermuda. After observing the historical nature of our first finds, we decided it would be worth the effort to try our luck on the far northeast end of the island.

Our target was a cove in Buildings Bay next to Alexandra Battery Park, east of St. George. The lengthy journey there became an adventure that started with a shuttle to the ferry at the Royal Naval Dockyards that took us to downtown Hamilton. Next was a cab ride to St. George where we had lunch and waited out a passing storm and then another cab ride over to Alexandra’s Battery where we arrived at our final destination



Once there, we found one of the most prolific sea glass beaches along the Atlantic Ocean.

As we knelt in the sand, we each could have picked up 50 or more shards from our positions—without moving—but with the ticker on the cab racing, we scrambled to pocket several of the better colors including pieces of well-worn black glass. As the rain came in, we dashed for our cab to make a quick drive north to see Fort Catherine on Gates Bay.

When we asked our driver about this northeastern portion of the island, he said that the two forts happened to be the sites of the first two original landings on Bermuda. The beach at Buildings Bay was in a protected cove but obviously received aggressive waves directly from the north, ideal for conditioning and weathering sea glass shards. We regretted not having more time to spend in St. George and on the beach at Buildings Bay, but we knew trying to bring back piles of sea glass might not sit well with Customs officials. The long bus ride back to Hamilton allowed us to enjoy more of the wonderful scenery of Bermuda.

Upon our return to *9Beaches*, Steve Lacey, our “singing bartender” with a wider range of octaves than most

choirs, generously rinsed our sea glass so we could paw through it to determine ages and origins. Several new friends with whom we shared our gems were intrigued by the sharp contrast in the conditioning of our finds, evidence of the degree of wave action occurring at each beach. The centuries-old shards from 9Beaches resort looked barely worn compared to volumes of conditioned glass that tumbled mightily onto Buildings Bay beach.

The next morning it was time to pack up and head to the airport. As the plane took off, it was a clear sunny day on Buildings Bay and that was when a contemplation of the two beaches took on a more philosophical meaning for me. Many of us spend large portions of our lives in protected waters, safe from risks and rarely facing the changes that may improve our overall beauty. The process of change can feel much like proceeding through tumultuous waters, but change often shapes us into more attractive forms that can be appreciated by others. We only have a short lifetime to make a difference in the lives of others. There is always a great healing power waiting for us along the shore.

Richard LaMotte is the author of *Pure SEA GLASS*, Proprietor of Chesapeake Seaglass Publishing and a NASGA Board Member

## **Florida Sea Glass Turtle: A Healing Art**

by Richard LaMotte

When Vero Beach artist Shotsi Lajoie first heard about a proposal to artistically design one of 52 fiberglass sea turtle statues for a benefit auction in 2004, she had no idea of how the project would impact upon her life. In March of 2006, when the turtle statue Shotsi designed sold for \$20,000 at auction, the third highest grossing turtle at the event, she could hardly believe the news.

Like many artists, Shotsi holds down a solid day job. As a psychotherapist in Vero Beach, Florida, she does regular contract work for the Mental Health Association of Indian River County. It was the Mental Health Association's Board of Directors who developed *Overcoming Hurdles with Turtles*, a plan to create and design sea turtle statues to auction off within the local community, thereby raising awareness of the challenges confronting the mentally ill. When Shotsi first heard about the opportunity, she immediately thought about covering a turtle in sea glass because of the obvious coastal connections. When she began shopping for only genuine sea glass to fit her 6-foot-by-5-foot behemoth, Shotsi was awed by its cost. Nevertheless, she held the line and over time amassed thousands of shards to decorate her turtle.

In her quest, Shotsi purchased several thousand sea glass shards from sellers within Florida and from as far away as Israel, Great Britain, Hawaii, California, Maine, New Jersey, Texas, Michigan, and Ohio. "When some people finally asked me why I needed so much sea glass, a few

were generous enough to donate some to me," said Shotsi. "I was so amazed by everyone's enthusiasm toward sea glass that I grew to appreciate the feelings people had for their treasures."

Shotsi had never been a sea-glass collector, so when a friend said that she would bring over some pieces to donate to the turtle project, Shotsi expected to see her arrive with a bag full of goodies. But when her friend pulled out five small shards that were obviously special to her, Shotsi realized she had been looking at sea glass in the wrong manner. Many collectors remember when and where they found special shards. Shotsi said, "It was clear to me then that every piece has its own story."

Shotsi's sister Jamie, an art major, was in the midst of a battle with breast cancer at the beginning of this project. It was Jamie who decided to take a leap of faith and help Shotsi who was over her head with this enormous commitment. Neither had ever attempted to use mortar with sea glass or much less complete a statue. Jamie had a graphic design background but her job was in the corporate arena, rarely utilizing her own artistic gifts. For Jamie, one trip to Florida



led to several more, and, in time, Jamie found a renewed love for art and music after 20 years of dormancy. As word spread on her condition and her mission to help her sister produce the sea-glass turtle, Jamie became embraced by the Vero Beach community. She felt she had a new home and a greater purpose. As Shotsi said, "It became her healing journey as well." Now Jamie is taking art classes and is a blossoming musician.

The two sisters did need additional help in this "engineering project," as Shotsi liked to call it. Their finished turtle needed to be strong enough to withstand the forces of Mother Nature. As a result, in addition to the use of strong mortar to secure each piece of sea glass, both sides of the turtle's shell were made from large pieces of copper.

These were stenciled with 17 "life skills such as flexibility, organization, caring, planning, effort etc. and the outer rim of the turtle back had the serenity prayer. The belly of this piece had the 12 steps of addiction on 12 separate plates. Embossing the front and back with copper was challenging, but with the graphic design skills Jamie had acquired, the job was beautifully and professionally executed.

It took well over 500 hours of work but was a poignant experience for both women. Shotsi and Jamie titled their work *The Spiritual Journey* which plays on the sea turtles journey back to its place of birth to lay her eggs and man's search for mental and spiritual health. Encircling the base of the statute was a quote from Einstein that read, "Insanity is doing the

same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."

So where did this 300-pound amphibian find a home? In the end, the sea-glass turtle was purchased at the benefit auction by an old friend of the Cain girls' late father. He gave it to his own son. Ironically, the two fathers had met and found that they both were in recovery.

Charlotte "Shotsi" Lajoie lives in Vero Beach, Florida and can be reached at 772-453-9049, Jamie Cain lives in Tucson, Arizona and can be reached at 520-299-6706

For more information on the auction visit [www.turtletrax.org](http://www.turtletrax.org)

To purchase a copy of the Turtle Trax book featuring all 52 turtles and their artists contact Vero Beach Book Center at 772-569-2050.

## NATURE + DETAIL

### BEAUTY



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