

The Ossabaw Island Foundation  
305 Fahm Street  
Savannah, GA 31401

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**The Ossabaw Island Foundation**

305 Fahm Street  
Savannah, Georgia 31401  
912.233-5104  
fax 912.233-5145  
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**Mark Your Calendars!**

**Fall Day Trip**

*Saturday, September 19*

**Pig Roast & Art Auction**

*Saturday, October 17*

**Annual Meeting**

*Thursday, January 14, 2010*

**What is Ossabaw Island?**

Ossabaw Island is a barrier island on the Atlantic Ocean owned by the State of Georgia and located in Chatham County.

**Who is the Ossabaw Island Foundation?**

The non-profit Ossabaw Island Foundation, through a public-private partnership with the State of Georgia, inspires, promotes, and manages exceptional educational, cultural, and scientific programs that are designed to maximize the experience of Ossabaw Island, while minimizing the impact on its resources.





# Ossabaw Oracle

Revealing the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island

Vol. XV No. 2

Summer 2009

A publication of the  
Ossabaw Island Foundation

## The Story of Lulu Belle

By Eleanor "Sandy" West, July 2009

For many years, on a black, heavily carved old high-backed chair in the front hall of Ossabaw's Main House sits a stately lady. She either welcomes you with amazing grace or scares your shirt off. Her name is Lulu Belle. She wears my mother's flowery white shoes and silk stockings, a handsome green gown from Ghana and a magic bead necklace from Africa. Her delicately tinted wax face is beautiful in spite of her seventy years. Her black hair is now a bit frowsy and held in place by real hairpins.

Here is her story.....

My father, ages ago, joined a trout fishing club in Michigan. Upon joining, new members were allotted a stretch of the trout stream and told to fish gradually upstream to the Club House. As he fished, my father was surprised by a small island blocking his way. Sitting on the bank of the small island was a very young lady naked as a jay bird.

See Lulu Belle, p. 2



## Genesis Project: Regenerated

In April 2009, fifteen former members of The Genesis Project on Ossabaw Island gathered for a weekend at The Torrey-West House on Ossabaw Island. The Genesis Project operated at Middle Place on Ossabaw from 1970 to 1982 as a cooperative, semi-sustainable living community, one of several projects of Clifford and Eleanor "Sandy" West's Ossabaw Foundation. The purpose of the April weekend was part reunion and part oral history project. It marks the first time since the end of the Genesis Project that former members have formally come together to discuss and record their memories.

This weekend was organized by several former Genesis Project directors and sponsored in part by TOIF; the foundation hopes that it will be the first of many such activities that reconnects Genesis and Ossabaw Island Project members and preserves their memories for the historical record.

What follows is an account of that weekend, written by Wini Wood, a former Genesis Project director. Wood is now a professor at Wellesley College in Massachusetts.

Former GP and OIP members are invited to submit their recollections to TOIF for our archives and possible

See Genesis, p. 4



**Artists who visited Ossabaw Island in 2009 through the Visiting Artists Program are reminded that the deadline is around the corner for your contribution of at least one piece of Ossabaw-inspired artwork for the fall art auction.**

## Only a Few Seats Left on Day Trip!

### Late Summer Day Trip to Ossabaw Island

Date: Saturday, September 19, 2009

Time: 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Fee: \$50 for Friends of Ossabaw Island, \$65 for Future Friends of Ossabaw Island.

See Page 3 for details.

## Fall Pig Roast and Art Auction

Saturday October 17, 2009

10:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

On the Grounds of the Torrey-West House, Ossabaw Island, Georgia

Tickets are now available! Purchase your tickets online at [www.ossabawisland.net](http://www.ossabawisland.net).

Sponsors: Holland, Henry & Bromley, Mitch Jacoby, J T Turner Construction Co., King & Spalding, Longwater & Co., Spanish Moss Printing

Host Committee: Gail Andrus, Patricia Barmeyer, Linda Bleiken, Callie Downing, Helen Downing, Peggy Galis, Laura Hardman, Jim Noyes, Paul Pressly, Zelda Tenenbaum

## Visiting Artists: Call for Artwork

The 2009 Fall Pig Roast and Art Auction is approaching fast! (See box above)

Each artist who contributes artwork to the Pig Roast will receive one (1) complimentary ticket to this year's event as a thank you gift for your contribution.

See Page 3 for details.

## Remembering Jim Simmons, former Ossabaw Island manager for DNR.



James Edward “Jim” Simmons III, 38, died on Thursday, July 9, 2009 at his home in Savannah, Georgia. For over 10 years, from 1998 until 2008, Jim was the manager of Ossabaw Island for the State of Georgia’s Department of Natural Resources. In 2008 Jim went to work for Georgia Power as a Forestry and Right of Way Management staffer in Savannah.

During his tenure with DNR, Jim, as a wildlife biologist, oversaw the environmentally sound conservation and management of Ossabaw Island. He was deeply involved with the development of the Comprehensive Management Plan for the island as well. Jim’s cooperative spirit and problem solving abilities were instrumental in helping the Ossabaw Island Foundation share the island with ever growing numbers of educators, scientists and artists.

Jim continued to be a friend to Ossabaw Island after leaving DNR. His wide grin and spirited sense of humor will be missed on the island and by the board and staff of TOIF.

Jim is survived by his wife Holly

Miller Simmons, son James Edward Simmons IV and daughter Adair Rose Simmons of Savannah.

We offer our support and comfort to Jim’s family, and our gratitude to them for designating The Ossabaw Island Foundation as a recipient of memorial contributions in his honor.

The following people have made donations to The Ossabaw Island Foundation in memory of Jim Simmons:

Stephen & Carol Abercrombie  
Mary Morris Andrews  
Mike & Shirley Bishop  
Daniel & Debra Bragg  
Woodford & Nancy Brown  
The Froebel Circle for the Fresh Air Home  
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Page Broomberg Tarleton  
Amy Urso  
Eleanor Torrey West  
David & Beth Williams  
Anna & Kyle Zolner

## Lulu Belle, con’t from Page 1

In hopes to avoid the young lady, my father, gentleman that he was, left the stream and circled the island through heavy woods and thickets, brambles and thorns. At the end of the day, new members returned to the Club House. The old members were standing on the porch to see who was scratched and bleeding and who wasn’t. Those that were bleeding were deemed gentlemen because they had gone to such lengths to avoid the naked lady.

The old members informed the gentlemen that the young lady was actually made of wax. My father, who loved practical jokes, thought this a bit of the all right and promptly bought his own glamorous wax lady, Lulu Belle, and had her shipped to Ossabaw. Lulu Belle has had her picture taken on the laps of five Georgia governors.

Here follow two of Lulu Belle’s Ossabaw adventures....

One time she was placed on the toilet of a guest bathroom. The various reactions of the guests gave my father huge joy and satisfaction.

I remember one wonderful time when the visitor was a handsome bachelor. Lulu Belle had been tucked into the twin bed next to the bachelor’s turned down bed. When he said goodnight and went into his room there was a moment of silence. We all spied from the living room and saw his door open stealthily. The bachelor just as stealthily peered up and down the hall and just as stealthily closed the door.



For more about Lulu Belle and her adventures on Ossabaw, come to the Pig Roast and read the event program.

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## Friends of Ossabaw 2009

Thank you to the Friends of Ossabaw who support the exceptional educational, cultural and scientific programs on Ossabaw since January 1, 2009

### Ossabaw Donkey (\$20-\$99)

Kemper & Richard W. Adams  
Al & Fondra Anderson  
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A gift from DBH Jones in honor of Sandy's 96<sup>th</sup> birthday.  
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A gift from Pam & David Spिटdowski, in honor of David Spिटdowski Jr.  
Richard & Joy Strait  
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A gift from Bill Steinhauer in memory of John Earl.  
Kristine Stevens  
Kristina Summers  
Beth VanTosh  
Gordon S. Varnedoe  
Patricia Vrobel  
A gift from Ron Weller in honor of Sandy West and in memory of John Earl.  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard H. Werner  
Margaret L. Willits  
Elsie H. Wilson, descendant of John & Lena Buys--plantation managers on Ossabaw in the late 1700s.  
Mr. & Mrs. Noel B. Wright  
A gift from Mr. & Mrs. John C. Wylly Jr. in honor of Dr. Paul Pressly.

### Lucky the Ossabaw Pig (\$100-\$499)

The Ambrose Family  
John Angell  
LeeAnn & Saunders Aldridge  
A gift from Jennifer Lance Atkinson in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Everett Shoemaker.  
Ian Benham  
Mr. & Mrs. Barrett G. Benton  
A gift from Don & Pat Bixby for the Torrey West Furniture Fund  
A gift from Al Bradford in memory of Chuck & Ann Wood  
Dana & Meg Braun  
Sam & Beth Candler  
Harriett DeLong  
Dr. C. M. Dilworth  
Cynthia Fuller  
A gift from Courtney K. Gaines in honor of Sandy West & Helen Downing  
Charles & Anne Hehn  
A gift from Annette J. Hines in honor of Eleanor Torrey West.  
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Mark V. Smith  
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Kristine Stevens & Gene Beeco  
Dr. & Mrs. Joseph T Stubbs  
Mr. & Mrs. Hue Thomas III  
A gift from Ken Thomas in honor of Eleanor T. West on her 95<sup>th</sup> & 96<sup>th</sup> birthdays.  
Jim & Shirley Triplet  
Vantosh & Associates  
Anna & Wiley Wasden  
Dr. & Mrs. C. Douglas Webb Jr.  
Mary Thrower Wickham  
A gift from Suzanne Williams in honor of Sandy West.  
Linda & Michael Zoller

### Fiddler Crab (\$500-\$999)

Ann & Herb Alperin  
Mr. & Mrs. Curtis Anderson  
A gift from Dr. & Mrs. William S. Andrus in honor of Mr. & Mrs. John D. Taylor.  
Dr. Charles W. Belin, Jr.  
A gift from the Ethel M. Looram Foundation and from Mrs. Peter M. Coy and Tim Coy  
Antonia Hamilton  
Robert Noble Architect PC  
Paul Pressly  
Alan Usher

### Woodstork (\$1,000-\$1,999)

Sue Ellen Clinard  
Mr. & Mrs. William B. Haile  
Dr. & Mrs. John Hardman  
Holland, Henry & Bromley, LLP  
Mr. & Mrs. John G. Kennedy III  
Mr. & Mrs. Philip Solomons  
Kathryn Standard

### Snowy Egret (\$2,000-\$4,999)

Burton Family Foundation  
Mrs. Denny C. Galis  
Mitch Jacoby  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Klank  
Dick & Audrey Platt  
Zelda Tenenbaum  
Mr. & Mrs. Randolph Thrower  
Art & Krista Williams

### Great Egret (\$5,000-\$9,999)

A gift from Patricia T. Barmeyer in honor of Sandy West's 96<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Great Blue Heron (\$10,000 and above)

Helen Downing

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*Contributions to the Ossabaw Island Foundation, a 501-c-3 not-for-profit corporation, are deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

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## OssabBEST — What's the Big Idea?

In June and July of 2009, 28 teachers and 38 students from 10 different Chatham County public middle- and high schools converged on Ossabaw Island. During the three day, two night on-island stays, they learned to use GPS devices and began mapping the island's roads. They also collected ground water and surface water data from various sensors located on the island by the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, and meteorological data from the University of Georgia's weather station, located at Ossabaw's north end.

The two week/four session on-island experience was part of the second year of "Summer Institutes" through OssabEST

(*Ossabaw Electronic Exploration for Students and Teachers*). This science, technology and education program on Ossabaw Island provides an opportunity for public middle school and high school teachers and students from Chatham County, Georgia to come to Ossabaw Island, just minutes from where they live and yet seemingly a world away.

The three-year OssaBEST program is operated by the Armstrong Atlantic State University schools of Science, Information Technology and Education and funded through a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation. The first of three OssaBEST "Summer Institutes" was conducted on the island during the summer of 2008, combining hands-on field observation with state-of-the-art computer technology.

In 2009, while the students were in the field, they also used digital cameras to capture a wide variety of the island's flora and fauna. Using these images students and teachers keyed out plants and animals and created entries for Ossabaw's on-line field guide.

After spending time on the island with their students, the teachers developed lesson plans so that they and other teachers can use their OssaBest experiences to share the island with others, and to use Ossabaw Island as a way to achieve state required teaching standards in language arts, math, science, and history.

"The Big Idea"--the main educational goal of each lesson plan—is identified by the teacher and reflects his subject area. In 2009, some of the big ideas emphasized included lessons in calculating slope, measuring conductivity, comparing properties of acids and bases, and homeostasis and cell transport.

Jonell Williams and Joy Bruton, teachers at Myers Middle School in eastside Savannah, worked as a team to develop a les-

son plan whose "big idea" compares erosion, temperature and other scientific data from undeveloped Ossabaw Island to data available for Tybee Island, one of the most densely developed barrier islands in Georgia.



Williams and Bruton used every on-island experience as a "teachable moment" for the Myers Middle School students that traveled to Ossabaw Island with them as part of Ossabest.

On a group trip to Ossabaw's South Beach in the buckboard wagon, pulled behind a truck, "all of a

sudden the whole road had just disappeared," said Bruton, during her lesson plan presentation this summer. "We had to make a quick decision—the kids [helped] unhitch the wagon" so that it could be turned around. Getting to the beach was going to involve a change in plans and an alternate route.

Once at the beach, Williams and Bruton waded across Big Slough with their students. A two foot deep, eight foot wide pile of wrack (dead Spartina grass) ran the length of the beach. After climbing across this "wrack line" the group headed south past live palms submerged in the slough and ancient oaks and cedars lying on the beach.

"That was a red flag," said Bruton. "We asked, 'What is going on?'"

Much later that day, the teachers decided to stroll down to Torrey Landing with their students. "When we got there we saw that the tide was so high the water was almost over the dock!"

From these observations, students determined that an unusually high tide had caused the amazing deposit of marsh grass to be deposited on the beach and had likely contributed to Willows Road washing away—a seemingly simple lesson that is not available to students living in dense urban neighborhoods in Chatham County.

On Ossabaw, Burton and Williams trained their students in the use of GPS technology and plan to teach their other Myers students about GPS during the school year, by identifying locations in a cemetery located across the street from the school and having the students find those locations.

"We want to simulate the Ossabaw Island experience for those students," said Williams.

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## What's Happening Right Now on Ossabaw Island?

Check out real time scientific data being streamed from Ossabaw Island. You can now search and graph the data from the Ossabaw Barrier Island Observatory web site. <http://ossabaw.skiio.usg.edu/search/searchdata.php>

Create graphs and CSV files and choose from three parameters for each sensor. Or you can simply visit the site and have a look around. <http://ossabaw.skiio.usg.edu>.

## Visiting Artists Program: Call for Artwork

Are you an artist who has participated in The Ossabaw Island Foundation's Visiting Artist Program? If so, the 2009 Fall Pig Roast and Art Auction is approaching fast!

The Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) is seeking donations of Ossabaw Island-inspired artwork—paintings, drawings, photography, sculpture, mixed media, fine crafts, etc.

The artwork will be sold in a silent auction as part of TOIF's Fall Pig Roast and Art Auction, the foundation's only fundraising event, held each year on the lawn of The Main House on Ossabaw Island.

Proceeds from the Pig Roast and Art Auction benefit TOIF's Torrey-West House Fund.

*Artists who visited Ossabaw Island in 2009 through the Visiting Artists Program are reminded that the deadline is around the corner for your contribution of at least one piece of Ossabaw-inspired artwork for the fall art auction.*

Artists who have attended the Visiting Artists Program in past years, or who have visited Ossabaw Island in the past for other programming, are also invited to contribute Ossabaw-inspired artwork for the 2009 auction. Each artist who contributes artwork to the Pig Roast will receive one (1) complimentary ticket to this year's event as a thank you gift for your contribution.

### Event date and time:

The Ossabaw Island Foundation  
Fall Pig Roast and Art Auction  
Saturday, October 17, 2009  
10:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

### Artwork contribution deadlines:

*Tuesday, September 15:*

Deadline to have your name listed in the event program as a contributing artist:

*Friday, October 9:*

Final deadline for all artwork contributions.

(Artists who donate after September 15 will not be listed in the event program.) Please deliver donated artwork to the Ossabaw Island Foundation office, in framed/displayable condition.

### Delivery address:

The Ossabaw Island Foundation, 305 Fahm Street, Savannah, Ga. 31401  
(This is in the Coastal Georgia Center behind the Savannah Visitors Center parking lot).

### How to acquire your complimentary Pig Roast ticket:

- Artists will receive an invitation to the Pig Roast in the mail.
- On the RSVP card, write "contributing artist" and your contact information and return the card in the enclosed envelope by the October 9 RSVP invitation deadline.
- If you wish to purchase additional tickets for friend/spouse, enclose payment for additional tickets in the same envelope.
- Tickets to the Pig Roast are \$150 per person, tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
- Note: Tickets to the Pig Roast are sold on first come/first serve basis. Seating on the boats to the Pig Roast is limited, so artists who wish to receive a comp ticket MUST send in their RSVP/ticket reservation promptly.

## September 19 Day Trip Details

The public is invited on an educational tour of Ossabaw Island, Saturday, September 19, 2009, led by The Ossabaw Island Foundation's Jim Bitler.



Ossabaw Island Heritage Preserve is a living laboratory for naturalists, scientists and educators; a studio for artists, a treasure trove of original research for archeologists, historians, and historic preservationists, and a place of inspiration for writers and thinkers.

The September tour includes an overview of the natural and human history of the island, and current educational, scientific and cultural programming on the island. You will tour and examine the recently restored, 1850's era tabby slave cabins, and you'll be taken by buckboard wagon to many spots on the island, including Middle Place, the former site of the Genesis Project community operated on Ossabaw Island in the 1970's and 1980's. Please note that the Torrey-West house and grounds is not a part of this tour.

The day trip group consists of a maximum of 30 people. Due to overflow demand from prior day trips, only a few seats remain for the September 19 event. Call Jim Bitler (912) 210-1613 or email now [jim@ossabawisland.org](mailto:jim@ossabawisland.org) to reserve your place, or sign up online at [www.ossabawisland.net](http://www.ossabawisland.net).

### Late Summer Day Trip to Ossabaw Island

*Date:* Saturday, September 19, 2009

*Time:* 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

*Registration:* Jim Bitler, (912) 210-1613 / [jim@ossabawisland.org](mailto:jim@ossabawisland.org) /  
Pay online: [www.ossabawisland.net](http://www.ossabawisland.net)

*Cost:* \$50 per person for Friends of Ossabaw, \$65 per person for Future Friends of Ossabaw.

Trip fee is payable in advance by online payment or by check mailed to: The Ossabaw Island Foundation, 305 Fahm Street, Savannah, GA 31401

Fee covers the round trip boat transportation plus the full day of programming/touring.

No refunds. Trip will occur rain or shine, except for during severe weather watches or warnings. In the case of trip cancellation due to weather, the trip will be rescheduled.

*Deadline to register:* Due to limited seating, anyone interested should register as soon as possible.

*What to bring:* Sack lunch, bottled water or other beverage.

*What to wear:* Casual outdoor clothes and closed toed shoes.

*Travel:* The boat to Ossabaw Island departs at 9:30 a.m. from Delegal Marina at The Landings on Skidaway Island. Please arrive at the marina by 9:15 a.m. The marina is about 30-45 minutes from downtown Savannah.

*Important:* Trip requires some physical exertion. Transportation on the island is via wooden buckboard wagon pulled behind a truck. Not recommended for people with knee, hip or back problems.

# The Ossabaw Gift Shop

T-shirts feature Craig Rubadoux's Ossabaw animals on the front and a map of the Georgia Coast on back. Short or long sleeved, buff shirt/brown printing.

Books include *Evocations of an Island* hardcover book, by Jack Leigh, Alan Campbell and James Kilgo, as well as boxed note cards featuring four different images from the book, (8 cards total, with 2 cards each image). Also, Ann Foskey's *Images of America: Ossabaw Island*, and now, *The God of the Hinge, Sojourns in Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Elizabeth Pool and Eleanor West. We also offer prints of William Armstrong's painting of Bradley Beach.

- Please send \_\_\_ copy(ies) of *God of the Hinge* @ \$16.95 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ copy(ies) of *Evocations* @ \$29.95 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ copy(ies) of *Images of America* @ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ box(es) of *Evocations* Notecards @ \$10 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ copy(ies) of Bradley Beach poster @ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ Short-sleeved T-shirt, S M L XL @ \$15 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ Long-sleeved T-shirt, S M L XL @ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

## Symposium DVDs

- Please send \_\_\_ DVD(s): Erskine Clark @ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ DVD(s): Allison Dorsey @ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send \_\_\_ DVD(s): Emory Campbell @ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

For US postage and handling, enclose \$6 for up to three items, \$12 for four or more items. \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Order:** \_\_\_\_\_

My check/money order is enclosed

Please charge to

- MasterCard  VISA
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Acct #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Send order to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Send completed form to:

**The Ossabaw Island Foundation**  
305 Fahm Street  
Savannah, GA 31401

# Genesis Regenerated, con't from Page 1

publication in The Ossabaw Oracle newsletter.

From the moment we set foot on the island, we knew that the Ossabaw magic—that blend of mystery and aching familiarity that we all yearned to feel again—would work to make this weekend far surpass our hopes and dreams. It took the gentle persuasive power of Helen Hamada and our strong desire to see Sandy West and each other, but somehow it happened: fifteen old-timers (old in so many ways....) associated with



Mike Billa, Winni Wood

Genesis came together at the Main House for a weekend of storytelling, cooking and eating, and re-acquaintance with the island. Some of us had maintained a continuous relationship with Ossabaw; some had become preoccupied with work and children “out there;” some had been back only once or twice. Some of us had seen each other off and on over the years;

a few of us didn't know the others at all. No matter. It was as if a Genesis community had reformed, with all the love, energy, interest, and excitement (and almost none of the work) of the old times. As Gloria Schoenholtz put it, “I've only been here one day, but I feel as if I've packed ten lifetimes into this visit.”

We were: Helen Hamada, Judy Barber, Jim Elicker, Al Bradford, Ann Jones, David Bayne, Leslie Ferst, Bill McCort, Jane Timmerman McCort, Kevin Donovan, Brian Donovan, Stephen Schoenholtz, Gloria Hanley Schoenholtz,

Michael Billa, and Wini Wood. We have become (among other things): a financial advisor, an art center director, an early childhood professional, the editor of a medical journal, a writer, a furniture conservator, a ceramicist, a dog trainer, a physician, a carpenter, a lighting expert, a professor of forestry, a science educator, an environmental engineer, a professor of

writing. We came from Colorado and Michigan and Indiana and upstate New York and Massachusetts and Virginia and Washington, D.C. to convene on this blessed place during the last week of April, 2009. Our reason for coming was in part to aid The Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) in carrying out its Ossabaw Memories Project by sharing recollections of our times on Ossabaw and what they had meant.

We were joined by Paul Pressly, Elizabeth DuBose, and Jim Bittler of TOIF, who collectively reintroduced us to the island; by Marilyn Hamada, who filmed the hour-long Memories Project interviews; and by Linda King, who is writing an oral history dissertation on Ossabaw Island. And of course, by our beloved Eleanor “Sandy” West, the person we most looked forward to seeing. Richard and Yvonne Boen and Sarah and Roger Parker were here, too, and later, Grayling and Amanda and Amanda's St. Bernard. And Sandy's dog Toby, and pigs, donkeys, horses, a goose, and a peahen. Everyone made us feel welcome, but especially Roger, with his trademark barbecue and “only-Roger-

could-say-this” conversation.

We were ushered into the Main House living room on that Friday afternoon for a formal, full-group question-answer session. It was Sandy’s first appearance downstairs, and it took a while for the screams and howls of first sightings to settle down. We heard Sandy’s continued vision for the island—a handful of carefully planned programs that remain interdisciplinary, that bring creative minds to Ossabaw Island for extended periods of time to allow fertile thoughts to develop, that keep the island at the center as the source of inspiration and knowledge. We got to know the leaders of TOIF, to hear and appreciate their vision, and to see the fine work they’ve been able to do in the last few years. We shared our own memories of the island and our times at Genesis (and in some instances, the Ossabaw Island Project), and we left with our commitment to this time, this place, and each other renewed and refreshed and stronger than ever.

Among the collective memories:

When asked to name our favorite view and favorite place on the island, it was surprising how many of us yearned to see the marshes again—Willows Causeway, Cane Patch, the Buckhead marshes around Middle Place. Middle Place sites came in second; the beaches, surprisingly, a distant third.

In our group were four couples who had met at Middle Place, subsequently married, and were still together nearly 30 years later. The strength and power of the bond surprised some, not others.

We recalled many old Genesis members and the knowledge that each brought to the group—Evan Fales and the snakes he would bring back to Middle Place for a demo each day after his run, Toni Hamilton and her journals (yay, Iowa!), Noah Baen and his paintings, Kevin and Brian Donovan and their beach transects, and many others. It was the capacity of the group to keep generating new knowledge and to share that knowledge with each other that kept us flourishing.

We reflected on why we had flourished and why our bonds were so deep: because we had all worked together to keep Genesis going--weeding the garden, milking the cow, repairing the buildings, cooking for one another, and, on one terrifying occasion, saving Middle Place from a controlled-burning fire that went out of control.

Some of us recounted to TOIF staff how our time on Ossabaw had radically changed our lives, including our careers, and tried to explain why the Genesis experience had the power to do that.

We recalled how physical our relationship with the island had been, how the sand and the sun would etch itself into our bodies, how we would witness births and deaths at first hand, how our

rhythms became timed to the rhythms of the tides and the moon. We felt that same adjustment happening during the short space of a weekend—it took no time at all for us to shift gears into Ossabaw time.

A Saturday trip to Middle Place proved sobering and reflective. We piled into the back of pickup trucks and left with our spirits high, the stories flowing, both old and new. We could have talked about our work, our children, and our lives outside, but somehow our mutually shared experiences made island talk more important. We recalled the building of the Tower House, the outhouse, the solar-powered shower (where we now found a hissing buzzard nesting on the floor), the firings at the kiln, the fire at the old River House and the building of a new one. We tried to picture the sawdust pile as it once had been (it is now nearly hidden by a palmetto stand). We mourned the loss of the A-frame, the treehouses, the Kenner’s shack, the Long House. And oh, the rubble of the cookshack, the one-time heart of Genesis! The stable looks, surprisingly, as it always had. We tried to remember who had built the first sweat lodge, and recalled the time nearly all of us had been



**Top row: (Lto R)** Stephen Schoenholtz, Gloria Hanley Schoenholtz, Leslie Ferst, David Bayne, Brian Donovan. **Middle row:** Jim Elicker, Helen Hamada, Judy Barber, Michael Billa, Wini Wood, Bill McCort, Jane Timmerman McCort. **Front row:** Kevin Donovan, Al Bradford.

on the island at the same time for a sweat lodge, after which we dove into the phosphorescence of the wintry waters of Buckhead Creek (at high tide, of course). We remembered cats eaten by alligators, and roosters that left spur marks on more than one of us, and a cow named Daisy and another named Genie.

Speaking of alligators, it was comforting to see that the big old ones are still feeding and breeding in the marshes of Willows Causeway.

A trip to the beach told us, in geological terms, just how long we’d been away—South End beach has entirely reshaped itself, and at low tide, when we arrived, is nearly a quarter-mile across. The long trek to water’s edge somehow echoed the distance and time that separated us from Middle Place of the 70s and 80s, and the new tide that rushed in with surprising force as we walked back reminded us of the renewal that constantly refreshes this ancient island.

We were in our 20s, 30s, and 40s when we worked on Ossabaw; we are now in our 50s, 60s, and 70s. What happened when we encountered this island and each other this time was something we hardly expected—we quickly forgot the images of our younger selves, quickly slid into companionship as our middle-aged selves, and felt, mysteriously, unchanged, “as if the past 30 years had somehow not happened.”

Afterward, the emails and phone calls continued for weeks, as we described tick bites and recounted our dreams to each other—and began to formulate new ideas, new ways of supporting Ossabaw, Sandy, TOIF, and each other.

