

Business & Growth

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59:
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599:
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599

Marine lab stays by sea



CAROLYN DEVONSHIRE /Special to the Democrat

Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory owner Jack Rudloe works with children in the field.

After 40 years, owner continues aquatic research

By Carolyn Devonshire
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT

What began as an ambitious challenge more than 40 years ago resulted in research that allowed Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory owner Jack Rudloe to find an organism that combats cancer, an illness that threatened his wife's life.

Through the lab, Rudloe continues efforts to protect endangered species, preserve wetlands and contribute to habitat restoration. How many business owners can boast such achievements from a small aquarium and research center in a seaside town the size of Panama?

Valdosta State University chemistry professor Tom Manning has been working with Rudloe since 1999.

"We do cancer research, and Jack provides us with organisms," Manning said. "He identifies them and tells us their history. He's been a phenomenal help



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Jack Rudloe opened the marine laboratory in 1963, and continues to aid in cancer research, protect endangered species and preserve wetlands.

to our research efforts. He gives us the 'big picture' view, while I concentrate on the academics."

Manning said author John Steinbeck wrote 30 letters to Rudloe, encouraging him to become a marine collector. Steinbeck's letters to Rudloe can be found online at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/steinbeck_studies/toc/stn16.1.html.

"Steinbeck was Rudloe's muse," Manning said.

Rudloe continues his quest, working in concert with the National Cancer

Institute, state and national government agencies and international researchers. Rudloe said he had an enormous attraction to nature when he was a young boy growing up in New York and continues thinking about how he can improve the world that future generations will inherit.

Rudloe opened his own laboratory in 1963, and the thrill of acquiring new marine animals to study and analyze their potential benefits to humanity has never waned. His lab was incor-

porated in 1980, and Rudloe's studies expanded to institutions of higher learning and marine research throughout North America and China.

The marine lab has participated in programs to protect coastal wetlands, sea turtles, marine resources and public lands since the early 1970s.

In 1995, the lab began a program that offered educational field trips for area school children, who enjoy the opportunity to interact with creatures of the deep. Curious visitors can handle some of the species, providing a rare treat for children.

"Students touch, smell, hear and even taste the odd and interesting Gulf sea life," said Rudloe, who is on hand to answer questions about them. "More than a hundred school groups and 16,000 individuals visit our laboratory each year."

■ Editor's Note: The complete story of Rudloe and his business, Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory, is featured in the next issue of *Business Matters* magazine, available on newsstands throughout the area Tuesday.