

REV. THURLOW WEED MAKES MUSIC  
ON A CONCH SHELL

An introduction by Mrs. Mary Malone explains the various types of Conchs. There are five or six different kinds of shell fish conchs, but there are only two which seem predominant here—the horse conch and the queen conch. The much more beautiful one is the horse conch.

There are also human Conchs, and to be very literal about it, they are descendents of English settlers who came to the Bahama Islands and settled in the early 1700's, and then moved on to Key West when they wanted to indulge in the wrecking trade. They brought many things with them including their houses in many cases which were pulled apart, barged over here, and set up. They are beautiful houses.

The shell fish Conch is good to eat if you like them; seldom is there a party here that there isn't a great big cut glass bowl of finely chopped conch meat which is very very tough; it is tendered with lime juice and garlic and onions and served as an hors d'oeuvre. If it's cut too large, you can't swallow it; it seems to get bigger and bigger in your mouth and after a while you have to look for someplace to deposit it. But, there is another use for it as a local gentleman has discovered. Of course, the conch shells were used to blow from ship to shore, and for mothers to call their children home for meals. You can blow a big blast on a conch shell that is absolutely deafening.

Rev. Thurlow Weed is pastor at the Presbyterian Church (United); he is an artist with the Conch Shell; He explained that before he can play the shell, the tip of it has to be cut off (the sharp point at the top of the spiral); it is generally done by using a masonry blade. This creates a spiral effect after the cutting is done; the spiral is broken out with a screw driver; this allows the tip end of the Conch shell to insert a brass mouthpiece and this is what it's blown through.

Rev. Weed played the King Kong March—the only known piece of music written for Conch Shells. This number was composed by a local Conch, Mr. M. Joseph Lowe; unfortunately Mr. Lowe could not be present for this interview but he had made a tape recording of the number on the piano and this was used. (The tune was delightfully played).

Other numbers played were: Grand March from Aida; Ode to Joy from the 4th movement of Beethoven's Ninth; The Shaker Tune by Aaron Copeland; The Hawaiian Hula; and old Spiritual Number; another, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"; the Conch arrangement of "The Sentimental Journey"; A Christmas Hymn, "Angels, We Have Heard on High,"; the Saber Dance.

The music can be enjoyed by listening to the tape.