

**PANAMA CANAL SOCIETY, INC.
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING
ROSEN SHINGLE CREEK RESORT
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
JULY 3, 2009**

President Tom Wilder welcomed the 160 members in attendance at the 76th Annual Business Meeting of the Panama Canal Society held at Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, Orlando, Florida on July 3, 2009 and called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Cheryl Russell, Chaplain, gave the invocation and **Chris Wilder, Sgt at Arms**, led the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Tom Wilder recognized the following past president in attendance: Peter Foster, Betty LeDoux-Morris, Marje Foster, Jim O'Donnell, Margot Jordan, Faith Brundage, Bill McLaughlin, Elaine (Vestal) Lewis and Bob Russell.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, copies of the General Membership meeting held on May 2, 2009 in Sarasota, Florida were distributed to the membership; therefore, the president asked for a motion to accept the minutes as written. Margot Jordan made a motion to accept the minutes; Betty LeDoux-Morris seconded it. Motion carried.

The May Financial Statement was also distributed to the membership and stands for audit.

President Tom Wilder reported that during the year the Society had a membership contest, and that he was pleased to announce that the Society had two winners for 2009. Colette (Foster) Carlisle won for encouraging six new members to join, and Maureen (Ferguson) Lewis won for encouraging 20 new members to join the Society.

Tom Wilder, President, began his president's report by thanking each of the volunteer board members for serving on the board for the past year: Margaret McLaughlin, 1st Vice President; Tom Spence, 2nd Vice President; Shirley Avery, Director; Pam Reid, Director; Mike Coffey, Director; Bliss Connerton, Director-at-Large; Jim Parthenais, Treasurer; and Bob Russell Immediate Past President. Their dedication, guidance and input have been very valuable. The president thanked the Standing Committee Members who support the Executive Board: Bill McLaughlin, By-Laws Chairperson; Jim O'Donnell, Legislative Representative; Chris Wilder, Sergeant-at-Arms and Webmaster; Cheryl Russell, Chaplain; Albert & Aura Wilder, Sunshine Committee and Beth Brandenburg, Insurance. The president recognized and thanked the staff who works behind the scenes: Nancy Van Sicien, Office Manager; Jacque Vowell, *Canal Record* Editor and Carol Masino, *Canal Record* Assistant. The president thanked his wife Kathy, who has been very supportive during his first year as president.

The president advised the membership that the board addressed several important issues this year that will improve the efficiency of the Society. These came as bylaw changes there were approved by the membership:

- 1) Increase in dues from \$30 to \$40 annually beginning in 2010.
- 2) The ability of the board to enable online voting of board matters.
- 3) Allowing a "director-at-large" to serve as a board member.

We have also improved our website which continues to be a work in progress. Several improvements were made to include a new look and ease of navigation. A return receipt e-mail feature and new forms were added. The board also approved adding a picture to the obituaries, which began with the June issue of the *Canal Record*.

Tom advised the membership that we have put together an Annual Presidents Report handout (copy attached to original minutes), which we hope will provide each of you a picture of the state of the Society. The members followed along as Tom reported on the progress of the Society since the 2008 Annual Meeting:

- . Our membership has declined over the last year. Dues that are collected are what fund the day-to-day operation of the Society. We continue to discuss ways to reach members that don't renew their membership.
- . The General Membership meetings continue to be well attended.
- . Carnavalito was again held in Melbourne and was very well attended and plans are in the works again to celebrate in February 2010.
- . Our general income vs. expenses from August thru May 2008 and for 2009 was reported. The graph shows an 11% decline in income. While it appears we have only decreased our expenses by 4% keep in mind that most of our expenses are fixed costs, such as rent and salaries. This year the board made a difficult decision to not provide our paid staffs any cost of living increase. We believe that further cuts would be difficult given our fixed expenses and lease agreement and rising postage costs.
- . One of the most significant savings has been to change printers for the *Canal Record*. This decision, while difficult, has been a real dollar savings in printing costs for the October, December, March and June publications, as compared to last year to the tune of \$10,125.29.

The president reported that we should continue to work hard to maintain or increase the membership; the Society is financially sound. As we proceed forward, Tom assured the membership that this board will continue to be good stewards of the member's funds and will always be looking at ways to cut expenses while continuing to "preserve American ideals and Canal Zone Friendships".

The president introduced **Randy Drake, C. P.A.** Randy reported that the Society is financially sound and that he has been associated with the organization for a number of years and it is a pleasure to continue on. Randy reported that it is important as an auditor, which is his primary vocation, to make sure that an organization has some key things in place and he wants to articulate some of these things as an auditor. He noted that it is very important for an organization to have financial responsibility.

First, the board of directors has a set of procedures in place, for leadership and transition. You notice new faces in place and shift of positions. There are always a group of people who have been here awhile and a group of people that are new and this leadership transition process ensures a very stable financial system. The board reviews financial information at their regular meetings. The Treasurer reviews the individual transactions. This is very important for a non-profit organization, especially for a volunteer board of directors and this process is in place for good leadership transitions.

Second, the Society has a stable group of office staff, which helps with a smooth transition.

Third, to have an independent set of auditors, one to help as a consultant, which is pretty much his role now? Randy reported that the board is doing more and more in house and using him more as a consultant than a technician. New software has been purchased to help the Society prepare their own tax returns.

Randy reported that the Society is continuing cost controls at all different levels. There are only certain costs that can be lowered and some are fixed. The board is constantly looking on how to control fixed costs. The variable costs, like the change in the printer for the *Canal Record* are constantly looked at to see if a more reasonable source is available. These costs go up with the amount of issues published, but the board found a printer that could do the same job for less which is an excellent job of cost control for printing.

Randy told the membership that he would be available after the Annual Meeting to answer any questions that they have and thanked them for the opportunity to speak with them.

Jim O'Donnell, Legislative Representative, highlighted the June Legislative Report (copy attached to the minutes).

The president called on Bill McLaughlin and thanked him for all his work this past year organizing the 2009 Reunion. **Bill McLaughlin, Reunion Coordinator**, reported that this is the third year we have been at Rosen Shingle Creek. Bill reported that all attendees that have registered have received a reunion flyer listing all the information and locations of the reunion activities and that at the Information Desk there are bulletin boards with lots of information on activities, class reunions, etc.

Bill called on Margot Jordan, Golf Chairperson, who reported that the golf tournament had 82 golfers signed up for a two-man scramble. The winners of the two-man scramble were Ed Bates and Dave Albanese.

Bill thanked the Panama Canal Museum for displaying all the different pictures of the clubhouses from the Canal Zone, and this year the hotel is featuring all different types of food including Black Angus Hamburgers hot off the grill. The clubhouse will be open till 1:00 a.m. each day.

This year we have two exciting Cultural Seminars co-sponsored by the Panama Canal Society and the Panama Canal Museum. Today's seminar features Dustin Smith, Zoological Supervisor of the Amazon and Beyond Miami Metro Zoo, and on Saturday afternoon you can hear some of the family histories contained in the Panama Canal Museum's publication "Write of Passage", a collection of personal reflections of life in Panama and the former Canal Zone during the American Era of the Panama Canal.

We are again offering the Panamanian dance class this afternoon, and on Saturday we will be having a 4th of July Pool Party sponsored by Panama Vacation Quarters and Rosen Shingle Creek. Our two dances will feature Tito Mouyney y Su Conjunto on Friday night and Frankie Pretto and his Paranda Band on Saturday night. The DJ dances will again be on Friday and Saturday nights from 11:00 p.m. till 4:00 a.m.

Our photographer, David Wright and his crew will be around taking pictures of the different events.

Bill also reminded the memberships that if you see a volunteer to say "thank you". The reunion comes together because of the volunteers.

Joe Wood, President of the Panama Canal Museum, highlighted the activity of the Museum over the past year. It also stated that this is the 11th year for the Museum and they are growing stronger. The membership was 800 last year, and they are hoping to sign up new members during the reunion. He also announced that the Museum has renewed their lease for three more years. The exhibit this year is on the Flora and Fauna of the Panama area, and the Museum has a cruise planned in January 2010.

At this point, Tom Wilder, President of the Panama Canal Society chaired another SWOT exercise for members to participate in. The findings from the program are attached to the minutes. After the exercise, Tom thanked everyone for his or her comments and suggestions.

Throughout the entire meeting door prizes were awarded which the vendors donated. The grand prizes donated by Condor Outfitters and Copa Airlines were won by Bill Fall and Betty LeDoux-Morris.

Bill McLaughlin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 p.m.; Bliss Connerton seconded it. Motion carried.

NANCY VAN SICLEN
OFFICE MANAGER/SECRETARY

TOM WILDER
PRESIDENT

