



Panama Canal Society Annual General Membership Meeting
Caribe Royale Resort, Orlando Florida
Reunion 2021 – July 9, 2021

Meeting called to order by Bill McLaughlin (President) at 10:04 a.m.

Bill McLaughlin welcomed everyone to the 2021 Annual meeting of the Panama Canal Society and announced Reunion time is the best time of the year seeing all the familiar faces. A quorum was established. Bill asked for a moment of silence for all the members who have passed in the last two years; then he introduced the Chaplain, Carl Orvis who gave the Invocation. Bill introduced the Sergeant-At-Arms, Christine (Kervin) Tirpak who lead the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance:

Bill introduced the **Board Members** who were present on the dais. Brittney Wilder (1st Vice President); James Beattie (2nd Vice President), Laura Kosik (Director), Patti Revello (Director), Nancy Van Siclén (Director), Tom Wilder (Director-at-Large), Elaine Lewis (Past President), Noreen Hanson (Treasurer), Raymond Husum (By-Laws Chairperson), Carl Orvis (Chaplain), Christine (Kervin) Tirpak (Sergeant-at-Arms), Bob Russell (Legislative Representative), Jacque Vowell (Editor), and Kathy Malin (Office Manager).

Then Bill introduced the **Past Presidents** who were in attendance. Betty LeDoux (1989-1991 & 2000-2002), Bill McLaughlin (2002-2004), Elaine (Vestal) Lewis (2004-2006), Bob Russell (2006-2008), Tom Wilder (2008-2014), Mike Coffey (2014-2018)

Members Attending: 134

Minute Approval: Bill asked for an approval for the May 15, 2021 General Membership minutes. Mike Coffey made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Buddy George. Motion carried.

President's Report: Bill summarized some of the actions the Executive Board initiated and completed in this past year.

- ❖ March 7, 2020 at the University of Florida was the last General Membership Meeting before the pandemic hit. The Board had several Zoom meetings leading up to the 2020 Reunion and then word came from the Caribe Royale that they were closing and our Reunion was cancelled. The office started processing Reunion refunds. There were quite a few members that didn't want to be refunded which helped cover the administrative fees in the office.
- ❖ The next dilemma was counting the votes of the newly elected Board members and the swearing in ceremony which should have taken place at the Annual Meeting during the 2020 Reunion. Past President, Mike Coffey, who was the Nominating Committee Chair met with the committee on July 15, 2020 at the PCS office in Lutz to count the ballots. CDC guidelines were adhered to when the count took place.
- ❖ The Board needed to be sworn in and since the conference room at our office building was too small for all of us to huddle in, Kathy rented a large event room at the Seven Springs Golf and Country Club, in New Port Richey for the ceremony. Shirley Avery Bentley (Outgoing President), Richard Grimison (Outgoing 1st Vice President), and Lee Bentley (Outgoing Director) were on a teleconference call with all present the formalities were done in passing the baton and the new Board was sworn in by Mike Coffey. We had a Board meeting after the swearing in ceremony. There were 100% attendance of the new Board members. Ray was on the phone since he isn't local.
- ❖ As a rule at the first Board meeting of a new Board, the employees of the Society are excused from the room and the new Board discussed to retain or not retain the employees. All three of our employees are outstanding in their jobs and were retained for another two years. Once retention is announced, as a formality, the employees are required to sign Policies and Procedures form. PCS did not have a employment contract which might have cause legal issues; so a committee was formed headed up by Bob Russell to remedy this. The Committee used LawDepot.com to create



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the employee contracts for Kathy Malin and Betty LeDoux. Jacque was changed from employee to contractor as she is basically seasonal. PCS is now in compliance with the State of Florida

As the pandemic months continued we decided to brave some membership meetings:

- ❖ We had a meeting scheduled for **September in Sarasota at the Der Dutchman Restaurant**, but we moved it to October. We didn't have the normally large crowd but was well attended considering.
- ❖ In November the **Space Coast Picnic** was held at Merritt Island with 28 members attending.
- ❖ On December 5, 2020 we had our **Christmas Luncheon** at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club with 77 people attending.
- ❖ The **March 2021 meeting at UF** was cancelled due to the campus being closed.
- ❖ We moved **Carnvalito** from February to April and was held at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort with 50+ in attendance.
- ❖ Finally we had our **Spring Picnic in May** with 65 attending. We had a beautiful day and the location in Anderson's Park was perfect...right on Lake Tarpon.
- ❖ We were always very careful and followed the guidelines in effect for each of these events. Those members attending were so happy to get out and do something after being locked up for so long.

Door Prizes: Several door prizes were drawn and Brittney Wilder thanked all the vendors and encouraged everyone to stop by and support the sponsors and vendors who generously donated door prizes.

Financial Report:

Even though the Expenses were low in 2020, PCS income dropped by \$88,223. Although the goal with the Reunion is to break even, PCS went way down in Reunion revenue because of Covid19 and the Reunion being cancelled. The \$15,955 income shown was made because members donated their Reunion fees instead of getting a refund after the Reunion was cancelled. Even with the Reunion being cancelled, there were administrative fees associated with the Reunion. This \$15,955 helped offset them. The Reunion income numbers from 2018 and 2019 dwarfs the 2020 figure.

We are down almost \$8,000 in dues which contributed to the negative bottom line in red.

If you read the President's message in the June *Canal Record*, you can see the Society is on a campaign to hopefully bring our membership back up by using the category of descendent on our membership application for joining the organization. There are no more new Zonians since the Canal Zone is long gone and some of our other qualifying categories are becoming obsolete. We need to encourage friends and family to join and maintain memberships. We need to excite descendants of Zonians to become members. Even sponsor an Associate Member. The Zonian family has always pulled together in times of need. We need your help now. Please inspire your friends, and your family to join and maintain their membership and we can get rid of that red number as the bottom line. If we continue like we are, this organization's longevity is in jeopardy and cease to exist in the not too distant future. Bill acknowledge Mike Coffey who signed up his four daughters as Governor's Club members.

You can see the drop in membership between 2019 and 2020. This is the ongoing trend and if we don't reverse this trend the Society is going to be hurting in future years. Tom Wilder expressed his feelings about Zonians and keeping up with our friendships and memberships.

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Reunion Coordinator Report:

Bill spoke about all the hard work put into planning the Reunion and this year really stressful with all the continuing changes to the Covid guidelines. He had to keep adjusting room floor plans. Bill thanked the volunteers who assist with making Reunions successful.

Katie Beattie gave her Golf Tournament report that was held at the Falcon Fire Golf course. It was the 41st annual Tournament. With the latest storm going through the Orlando area, the players had to stay on the cart path but there were 78 golfers. The play was a little slow and one team didn't finish but all in all, they had a good time. First place team were Louis Vogel, Mark Roscoe, Donny Husted and Jason Bacot. Second place was John Readon, Richard Hunt, Brad Taylor and James Nourse. The closest to the pin was Clover Duffus and Louis Vogel had the longest drive.

Bill thanked the sponsors: B&C Financial Advisors, Condor Tours and Travel, Bentley family, The Gattorna Grimison Realty Team, Howler Monkey Hot Sauce, Due Course Marine Services, Space Coast Panazonians, and The Episcopal Cathedral of St Luke. Bill explained that Ricardo March has left the Varela and Sons company Abuelo and we tried to get the new importer to sponsor. With Varela reorganizing their operations, they could not sponsor this year but are considering next year. Bill contacted Ricardo and had to purchase the Ron Cortez from him in Miami so there would be rum at the Happy Hours last night, Friday and Saturday evenings.

The Cultural Seminar will be held this afternoon with John Nemmers and Betsy Bemis giving a presentation on *Canal Defenders*. John & Betsy will show dozens of slides on the Golden Age of comics, pulp fiction, film clips, and recordings and its popularity as a setting for wartime stories.

Los Legionarios played ping ding music last night with about 100 in attendance. BHS 76 is hosting tonight's dance called, "Journey Back to the Zone" with a band and a special entertainer, James Slater, a BHS 76 classmate who is a Grammy nominated songwriter. Frankie Pretto and the Parranda Band will play for the Annual Ball on Saturday beginning with a Murga at 8:30pm. Next year, at the 90th PCS Reunion, we will host the big Murga with dancers, queens and more musicians.

The 11th Annual Pool Party will be Saturday. You will need your name badge and a photo ID to partake in the free beer. The DJ will be a fellow Zonian, David Smith.

Your name badges will give you 10% discounts at most of the hotel restaurants. Free parking is only for the hotel guests.

Brittney Wilder called more lottery numbers for door prizes.

Reports to Memberships:

Bill introduced Joe Wood, President of the Friends of the Museum and Judy Russell, the Dean of the University of Florida Smathers Libraries. They reported it has taken 9 years since the Collection was transferred to the University of Florida (UF) who had digitized, maintained and preserved our history. UF has created annual displays that are open to the public. There are 3 sources of income to maintain this continued endeavor: 1) Friends of the Museum membership which there are 117 members which raised about \$8,700. Membership starts at \$26 a year. 2) Two endowments totaling \$700,000 and interest. 3) Reunion Silent Auction has raised over \$100K throughout the last nine years. There was a turnover this year with Mickey Fitzgerald and Carole Miller organizing the Silent Auction. Brad Wilde donated rare postcards to the Museum.

Dean Judy Russell presented Bill with a gift of appreciation for all the hard work he has done with the Panama Canal Museum Collection (PCMC) and the Reunion. There are 55 donors keeping the Museum going. The UF group are



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interviewing Zonians for Oral Histories to be shared. UF plans to kick off a campaign to celebrate the 10th year of the PCMC. Because of COVID, the campus was closed most of 2020, so the Museum staff decided to keep the 2020 display cases throughout 2021. Next year, the theme will be Health Care.

Betty LeDoux spoke about the Reunion being held at the Shingle Creek Resort the next 4 years. The base hotel rate in 2022 will be \$136; Executive suites at \$250 & \$281 and Grand Suites at \$325. Good news is all the Hospitality Suites are on the ground floor in one area.

Bill told the members that there are over 5700 PCS FaceBook members but less than 2000 paid PCS members. We need to recruit our families, classmates, friends, and descendents.

More door prizes were drawn.

New Business:

Bill announced to the members about a Special Recognition Award that he would like voted on to give Frankie Pretto a Honorary Lifetime Membership for all his years of playing at the Reunion Ball. Tom Wilder motioned to give Frankie the Lifetime Award, Betty seconded and the motion was carried.

Bob Russell was asked by the President to be in charge of the next Nomination Committee. Bob announced that Noreen Hanson and Jacque Vowell from the Board will be on the committee and needed to members to join the committee. Dennis Gilbert nominated Betty LeDoux. Bob said to see him after the meeting if anyone else was interested.

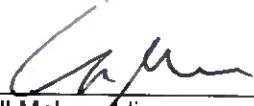
Janice Scott took to the microphone to speak about the Windfall Act. We need to lobby Congress now because this act is cutting Social Security pensions by 2/3rds. Janice asked if anyone wanted to discuss this, to please stay after the meeting.

Bill was asked by the Blair family to talk about a parasite that Bobby Blair possible caught while swimming in the Gatun Lake. This parasite lived in his body for years but effected him later in life. Bobby recently passed away from liver cancer. Margie Blair will follow up with more detail news in the October *Canal Record*.


More door prizes were drawn followed by the 2 Grand Door Prizes. The first was is an original Al Sprague lithograph of the St Luke's Cathedral donated by The Cathedral of St Luke. It was won by DeAnn Clark.

The next grand prize was donated by Lori Snow of Condor Tours and Travels. Bill thanked Lori for her dedicated hard work throughout the years and especially this year, finding hotels to donate during this hard hit the tourism industry took. Evelyn Barraza won the Grand Prize which included 2 nights in Panama City at the Central Hotel, 1 night at the Gamboa Rainforest Resort with breakfast and 2 nights at the Westin Playa Bonita Resort with breakfast included. Lori stated because of the pandemic, the hotels have asked that you book your trip between January & June of 2022.

Bill asked if there were any questions or comments from the members. Joan Ohman motioned for the meeting to be adjourned, Ted Kaufer seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 11:21 am.



Bill McLaughlin
President



Kathy Malin
Office Manager