



PANAMA CANAL SOCIETY
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
OF SMATHERS LIBRARIES/FRIENDS OF PCMC MUSEUM
March 26, 2022

At noon, John Nemmers, from the Panama Canal Museum Collection (PCMC), welcomed the attendees and to visit the Museum exhibit across the hall. John announced that Dean Judith Russell was disappointed in missing this function but had a funeral to attend. John welcomed Al Sprague and his family and encouraged people to visit his artwork across the room. He thanked the Panama Canal Society and introduced the PCS President, Bill McLaughlin.

Meeting was then called to order by Bill where he welcomed the 102 attendees and was exciting to see the Museum Collection. Bill introduced Carl Orvis to give the invocation. Carl asked for a moment of silence for our departed family, friends, and the military. After the invocation, Carl led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bill introduced the Past Presidents and Board Members present: Tom Wilder, P.P and Director-at-Large; Elaine Lewis, P.P and current Past President; Bob Russell, P.P. Director and Legislative Representative; Brittney Wilder, 1st Vice President; Carl Orvis, Chaplain; Jacque Vowell, *Canal Record* Editor; Kathy Malin, Office Manager; and Anna Hertrich, our new Office Assistant. Bill thanked Kathy for her hard work at the office and the event. Bill also thanked his wife, Margaret, for leading the Decorating committee for the Reunion.

He asked all to review the Space Coast Membership meeting minutes as well as the Profit and Loss (P&L) statement that has been placed on every table during lunch. The meeting broke for lunch.

The meeting was called back to order at 12:50 p.m.

Bill introduced the Biomuseo gentlemen in attendance, Darien Montanez, Diego Castillo and Luis Miranda. They are here from Panama to do research at the PC Museum Collection of the history of Fort Amador. Biomuseo plans to have billboard size displays on the Causeway to honor Fort Amador. They hope to have this completed by October 2022. They have turned the old Amador Officer's Club into offices and a Museum.

Bill asked if all have read the meeting minutes from PCS Space Coast General Membership Meeting. Elaine Lewis made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Jane Huff seconded, and the motion carried.

Bill asked if there were any questions about the P&L, there were none and will stand for audit.

This year is a transition year from our current Board to a new Board who will take over in August. In the March *Canal Record* there are names, bios, and pictures of the nominees for the 2022-24 term. Bill asked all to show their support and vote for a candidate of your choice even if they are running unopposed.

The Society would like to thank Albert Nahmad, BHS 58 and his wife, Jane, for their generous donation to the Panama Canal Society back in December. Albert didn't realize the PCMC, and PCS were two different organizations and is supporting both organizations.

2022 is a special year as it has been 90 years since the Panama Canal Society was established. As a custom on many occasions, the Panama Line ship, the S.S. Ancon, arrived at the Ambrose lighthouse at the entrance to New York harbor on the evening of July 14, 1932 to be docked at a pier in the Hudson River early the next morning. That evening in the social hall of the S.S. Ancon with the city lights of New York ahead of them, Mr. John F. Warner along with other charter members established the Panama Canal Society and wrote its Constitution and By-Laws. The Society will always pay honor to the S.S. Ancon as the birthplace of the Society.

To commemorate the 90th Anniversary, PCS will have a cake cutting ceremony at the Annual Meeting on July 8th. Bill asked all to attend for the latest Society news, business and have a piece of cake.



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The 2022 Annual Reunion will take place from July 6th – 10th at the Rosen Shingle Creek. All Reunion information was in your December and March *Canal Records* and online. Updates will be printed in the June *Canal Record*. We will have 3 live bands on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings plus the night owl DJ dance late on Friday evening.

The Cultural Seminar will have Dr Stanley Heckadon from the Smithsonian Tropical Institute with two very interesting presentations. See *Canal Record* for more details. There was a setback for the Annual Luncheon. The guest speaker, Ilya Marotta, had to cancel for family reasons but she found a great replacement. Miguel Lorenzo, Vice President of Infrastructure and Engineering for the Panam Canal will now be our guest speaker.

If you registered for the Reunion by February 8th, you are in a drawing for three gifts during this luncheon, but you do not have to be present. The gifts were donated by the Rosen Shingle Creek and are (1) Complimentary three-night stay (king or double queen room); (2) An upgrade from a regular room to a suite; and (3) A dinner certificate for \$200 to *Calla Bella* or *A Land Remembered* fine dining restaurants. Winners were drawn and they are: (1) Jeffrey Clark; (2) Bonnie Abellera; and (3) John Meeker.

Reunion registrations are coming in strong as well as new memberships, Governor's Club, and renewals. Membership has been declining so everyone needs to encourage family and friends to sign up. June 3rd is the deadline for Reunion registration and hotel reservations. Volunteers are needed for many parts of the Reunion. Laura Kosik is our Volunteer Chairperson, so contact her or the office if interested. Bill asked for any questions. He then introduced John Nemmers for a PCMC report from George A. Smathers Libraries.

Before John reported on the PCMC, he introduced Joe Wood the President of the PCMC Friends. Joe reported that there are 219 members in 2022 thus far. The Friends' Silent Auction at last year's Reunion raised \$8,500 and he thanked Mickey Fitzgerald, Kathy Egolf and Carole Miller as well as all the volunteers. In the Fall of 2021, the PCMC Friends had a challenge to match the Reunion's Silent Action. They surpassed their goal in 8 weeks and raised \$20,000. The goal is to raise \$250,000 to support the PCMC Oral History Program by the end of 2022. As of February 2022, they have raised \$122,445. PCMC Friends have been raising funds since 2010 and since that year, have raised over \$1,125,025 in charitable donations. Joe encouraged everyone to pledge at least \$26 a year which originated from the Panama Canal Company had 26 pay periods thus employees donating \$1.00 a pay period.

John came back to the podium to speak about the PCMC many researchers' queries, the University of Florida has 9 courses about the Panama Canal and the gallery displays. The digital collection has over 2.5 million views this year to date and in 2020-21 had over 3.8 million views. The most viewed title to date is the *Panama American*. He thanked all the donators. The Oral History program is run by Betsy Bemis and there are 164 interviews in the PCMC site. There is a new program called the "Books of Honor" that was created to help ensure that students and faculty have the library resources that are crucial to their studies and teaching. When you sign up you will have your name plate in PCMC book to help fund the program.

John then spoke about the Albert Nahmad Gallery Exhibition that is displaying the Health Care in the Canal Zone. He encouraged all to visit and ask questions of the UF team. John mentioned all the artwork donated by Al Sprague and other donators.

Door prizes were drawn.

John Nemmers than introduced Len Kujawa, a PCS member, who spoke about working in the Canal Zone and working with President Carter and Governor Parfitt in 1977 with the Treaty. He flew with Governor Parfitt to Washington, DC to testify at the Senate. A lot of Senators thought since the Americans built it and paid for it, we should not turn over to Panama. President Carter's selling point was no more money for the US taxpayers. Governor Parfitt and Len wanted to ensure that the US employees working in the CZ had benefits after the Treaty. After President Carter signed the Treaty,



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things got 'dicey' with General Noreiga in the 1980's and the US had to invade Panama. There were long and tense lines at the airport. Len commissioned Al Sprague to paint the mule pulling a ship through the Canal. This was Al's first painting of a lock's scene in 1970. This painting's image was used as the image on the last Canal Zone postage stamp.

John thanked Len for his words and introduced Kassie (Sprague) Taylor. Kassie has been helping her father, Al, for 27 years as his Art representative. Kassie and Al's wife, Marsha, wanted to share Al's story and began creating a book that took a year before being published. Stop by after the luncheon to purchase and have Al sign it. Kassie then introduced her father, Al Sprague.

Al spoke about his many childhood mischievous adventures with his friends, Jimmy DesLondes and Bob Hummer. He even said he was kicked out of Art class and came back 10 years later to teach in the same room. Al credits his love of art to his mother who gave him paints and a canvas and told him to head to the Causeway and not come back until he painted a picture. Al's first painting was of the Causeway was on display at the luncheon and he just donated it to the PCMC.

Door prizes were drawn.

Bill returned to the podium to thank all for attending, UF for the table decorations and programs, Al Sprague, and his family for donations of his paintings. He reminded all to register for the Reunion and recruit members.

Cheryl Russell made a motion to end the meeting, Joan Ohman seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:16 p.m.



Bill McLaughlin, President



Kathy Malin, Office Manager