



Panama Canal Society Annual General Membership Meeting  
Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, Orlando Florida  
Reunion 2023 – July 7, 2023

At 9:33 a.m., President, Bill McLaughlin welcomed everyone to the 2023 Annual meeting of the Panama Canal Society and announced that, "Reunion time is the best time of the year! It is always nice to see so many familiar faces in one place. The Canal Zone is still alive and well right here in Orlando this week." Bill thanked all the vendors that donated door prizes and those sponsors that donated dollar support. The 2% quorum for this meeting was reached with approximately 162 members in attendance at 9:30. [83 more came in after the quorum was established.] The meeting was then called to order by Bill McLaughlin at 9:35 a.m. Carl Orvis asked all to turn off cell phones or put on vibrate.

Bill introduced Society Chaplain, Bill Lane who gave the Invocation. Then Bill McLaughlin asked for a moment of silence for our departed members and friends. Next, Bill introduced the Society Sergeant-at-Arms, Ted Kaufer who led the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance:

Bill introduced the 2022-2024 Executive Board Members who were present on the dais. Carl Orvis (1<sup>st</sup> Vice President); Laura Kosik (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President), Penny Canamas (Director), Bosco Hoyte (Director), Mike Young (Director), Margaret McLaughlin (Director-at-Large and Decoration Chairperson), Elaine Lewis (Past President), Raymond Husum (By-Laws Chairperson), Bill Lane (Chaplin), Ted Kaufer (Sergeant-at-Arms), Jacque Vowell (Editor), and Kathy Malin (Office Manager). Bill also introduced Anna Hertrich (Office Assistant), Betty LeDoux and Cheryl Williams (Hotel Coordinators), Rae Donaldson (Sunshine Chairperson) and John Husum (FaceBook Administrator).

Then Bill introduced the Past Presidents who were in attendance: Margot Jordan (1997-1998), Betty LeDoux (1989-1991 & 2000-2002), Bill McLaughlin (2002-2004) (2020-2024), Elaine (Vestal) Lewis (2004-2006), Bob Russell (2006-2008), Tom Wilder (2008-2014), and Mike Coffey (2014-2018).

#### **Old Business:**

Minutes Approval: Bill asked for an approval for the May 20, 2023, General Membership minutes held at Anderson Park in Tarpon Springs which were distributed for everyone to read. Tom Wilder made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mike Coffey. Motion carried.

Bill introduced Kathy Malin, Office Manager and Temporary Treasurer to give the 2022 Financial Report. Kathy read the 2022 full Financial Reports to the members and will also be in the October *Canal Record*. Kathy explained how the Society had a loss in operating expenses in 2022 by \$42K. The difference between 2021 and 2022 happened because there was a \$10K donation from member Albert H. Nahmad, BHS Class of 1958 which helped with expenses. In addition the Society made \$5K in investment interest. The losses in 2022 were the costs of producing the *Canal Record* that increased in cost by \$9K with the increase in the cost of paper, rent increased by \$5K, salaries increased by \$7K, banking fees increased by \$2K and membership decreased by \$2K. Some good news is that our CD investment that the members voted for late last year is making money. In January 2023, the Board voted on the investments and thought it was prudent to leave some funds available for operating expenses. The board invested \$150K in a Truist CD for 12-months at 4.25% and the maturity date is January 26, 2024. There was a miscommunication with Truist thus Kathy explained she left \$150K in a Money Market account but they raised the interest rate from .5% to 3.44%. The Society is averaging about \$425 a month in interest now. On June 29<sup>th</sup>, when Kathy went into the bank to withdraw cash for the Reunion, the Truist manager informed her that they now had a 7-month CD at 5% interest. Knowing that the Executive Board had been advised of this available investment, Kathy transferred \$75K into that CD that expires on January 29, 2024; thus, leaving \$75K + interest in the Money Market account. A 5-year membership slide was shown indicating that in 2023, we are down to 2,054 members. Bill thanked Kathy for that report.

Door prizes donated by our Vendors then were drawn.

Bill gave his President's Report where he announced we are still looking for a Treasurer, Legislative Representative, and a Zonie costumed mascot volunteer. Bill said that he is grateful for this board as they are a good team which is needed to run this organization in these times of uncertainty. Bill said, "I am going on my 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year as president because no one wanted the job. We don't have a people lining up to get on this board. Thank heaven Carl Orvis has stepped up to run for President for the next term. Nominations for the next term will begin in the Fall of 2023 with the new Board starting after the Reunion in 2024. If anyone is interested in running for any position on the board, contact the office and look in the October and December *Canal Records* for how to participate.



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The new website is up and running just in time for the reunion registration. The new website was created by our Office Manager, Kathy Malin and her team along with member Dane Richardson. Great job Kathy! Bill thanked Chris Wilder for his many years as the Website Administrator.

Bill discussed the operating expense of the *Canal Record*. The Board has considered many ways to control the costs of printing. They discussed digitizing, going from 4 Records to 3, etc. Many members do not want a digitized book and would rather want to read the book. If we have the book online, it would be difficult to control the sharing of *Canal Records*. Members might share passwords, thus less people would want to become members. If we print less issues, the 3 remaining issues will be larger thus we are not downsizing by using the same amount of paper.

With the operating expenses being in the red, the Society needs to make changes and the board decided raising membership by \$10.00 to \$50.00. The last membership increase was back in 2009. The Governors Club membership will be \$250 versus \$200.

Throughout the year, the Society is having great General Membership meetings, including helping other states with organizing picnics and luncheons. The Christmas luncheon is being moved from St Petersburg Yacht Club to the Columbia Restaurant in Ybor City. After many great years at the St Petersburg Yacht Club, they will be tearing down this old icon building soon. Registration for the Christmas luncheon will be in the October *Canal Record*.

Bill said, as Zonians, we need to pull together, join, keep memberships current and recruit new members. Our FaceBook has over 6,200 members but the Society has just over 2,000. There are only 162 members here this morning.

Carl announced more door prizes donated by our Vendors.

#### **Reunion Report:**

Bill announced this year the theme is a Musical Reunion. Besides the musical show at the Annual Luncheon, there are four dances, a Murga before the ball and on Sunday ending up with the Panama Dancers Despedida performance on Sunday. The last Musical Luncheon was directed by Bruce Quinn over 20 years ago and had over 1,000 attendees.

Yesterday, there was a successful golf tournament with 72 golfers and a new golf director, Dave Bishop. Bill thanked Katie Beattie for her many years of organizing the golf tournament. Bill had Carl announced the winners. 1<sup>st</sup> place Low Net score of 52.2 went to: Louis Vogel, Tom Ellis, James Beattie, and Rubin Prieto. 2<sup>nd</sup> place Low Net score of 57.45 went to: Mike Coffey, James Peace, Garrett Frank, and Louis Langermann. 3<sup>rd</sup> place Low Net score of 57.55 was a tie between 2 teams. One team is Arthur Egger, Jim Nourse, John Reardon, and Drew McCullough. The other team is Frank Alberga, Jerome Lyons, Cesar Mendoza, and Ingrid Diaz. The longest female drive on the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole was Clover Duffus; the longest male drive on the 8<sup>th</sup> hole was Garrett Frank; the closest to the pin female for the 5<sup>th</sup> hole was Rebecca Fall; the closest to the pin male for the 15<sup>th</sup> hole was Bob Rupp; the closest to the pin – any player for the 7<sup>th</sup> hole was Dave Bishop; and the closest to the pin – any player for the 17<sup>th</sup> hole was Tom Finneman. Besides the Society donations, Frank Anderson and Tom Ellis donated door prizes. Next year, Dave wants to organize a 2-person scramble, but the hotel is only allowing 72 golfers participate so early sign up is a must.

Bill thanked all the Reunion sponsors who were Condor Tours and Travels that donated 3 Panama packages, B&C Financial with Tom Ellis and Howler Monkey hot sauce donated the kegs of beer for the Pool party, and Abuelo located in Spain donated the rum for the 3 Happy Hours. Luncheon sponsors included Kathy Egolf, numerous donations in memory of Nancy Van Sicen, a generous donation in memory of Bill McKeown, BHS 58, LeaderOne Financial Corporation with Mike Coffey, Compass Fenton Collection with Kelly Fenton, BHS 72, BHS 62, Due Course Marine, TraderBrock and the PC Society. Peggy Huff with the Space Coast sponsored Despedida and Shirley Avery-Bentley donated the large orange Registration bags. If you are interested in being a sponsor for next year's reunion or other functions during the year, please contact the office.

University of Florida (UF) and the Friends of the Museum are hosting the Cultural Seminar this afternoon at 2:00 pm with the theme being "Hometown Memories". The dance tonight is being hosted by CHS 78, BHS 78 and BHS 73 and the best



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part, it is free entry. The Pool party is tomorrow from 2:00 – 5:00 pm, followed by the Murga at 7:30 and the Ball starting at 8:00 pm. Sunday morning at the Despedida performance, a lottery will be drawn.

Ray Husum was introduced and gave his report for Bylaw changes 45 and 46 which goes into effect today. Ray always does a great job as Bylaws Chairperson.

Bill then introduced John Nemmers, the UF Smathers Libraries curator of the Panama Canal Museum Collection (PCMC). John announced this year was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the original Panama Canal Museum in Seminole. UF is so thankful for the many people who started this museum and continue to help the PCMC thrive. John displayed slides with 74 research queries and their topics as well as explained that UF now has 3 courses in History and Latin American studies. There is more than 250K collection views on the website with the most viewed title to date, is the *Panama American* newspaper. Next slides had 75 names of individuals and organizations who donated materials to the PCMC. This year, the PCMC exhibit was "The Cutting Edge" about the construction of the Panama Canal. Next year the exhibit will be on the Panama Railroad. Betsy Bemis, Associate Curator of the PCMC, also oversees the Oral History program where there are 186 interviews completed to date. If anyone is interested in giving an oral history, please contact Betsy. Another big supporter of the Museum is the 192 members of the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection at UF. These members raise funds and organize the annual Silent Auction. Last year at the Reunion, the group rose over \$10K then later that year in a 10-week challenge, Friends raised \$19.9K in additional funds. Their goal is to raise \$250K to support the Oral History program and to date, have raised \$161,625. A big thank you to Carole Miller, Mickey Fitzgerald and Kathy Egolf for all of their hard work and dedication to the PCMC. Stop by the UF room and Silent Auction to write your name on the maps of the towns you lived in. We are "mapping memories".

**New Business:**

Bill announced in the June *Canal Record*, the Board was honored to recommend Ms. Noreen Hanson for Honorary Life Time Membership with the Panama Canal Society. Bill read all her accolades and accomplishments for the Panama Canal Society and the Executive Board from the June *Record*. Gerry DeTore made a motion to present Noreen Hanson an Honorary PCS Membership; Margot Jordon seconded it and the motion passed. Bill called Noreen to the stage where he presented her with a plaque. Noreen thanked the members and the Board.

Bill asked if Steve Price was in the room. Steve was not in the room, but he was going to speak about herbicides in the Canal Zone. The military veterans have a bill in the Senate about all the diseases that the military was exposed to after finding Agent Orange. He would like the civilians to be added to the bill. Steve will be outside of the vendors with more information.

Bill opened the meeting up to the members for questions and comments. Steve McCauley wanted the members to get the military who lived in the Canal Zone more involved with Society. Lydia Escalante came up to the microphone and mentioned all the websites there are for the military and their dependents. She stated that the Albrook AFB dependents get together every two years for a mini reunion and offered to investigate. John Husum, the Society's FaceBook manager, will also investigate posting information on military FaceBook pages. Kathy Malin stated the Society has put ads in different military magazines.

Jim Duffus told the meeting attendees that people should purchase Governors Club membership for their adult children.

Bill reminded all about self-parking and the 25% discounts at most hotel restaurants.

Door prizes donated by our Vendors were drawn ending with 2 large baskets, one donated by Miriam Tiblier with Panamanian goodies and a special PC Society basket made by Margaret McLaughlin. Then Bill asked Lori Snow of Condor Tours and Travel to come up to the microphone for the final 3 grand door prizes which her company donated to the Society and its members.

Loreen Ridge-Husum won the third Grand Prize which included 2 nights at the Gamboa Rainforest Resort and 2 nights at the Westin Playa Bonita Resort (breakfast included at both hotels). The second Grand Prize was won by Doug Aseron which included 2 nights at the Los Manadriños in El Valle and 2 nights at the Radisson Panama Canal (breakfast included

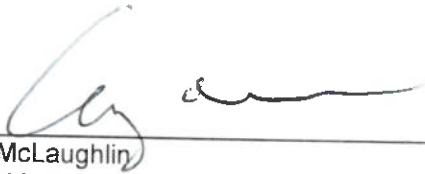


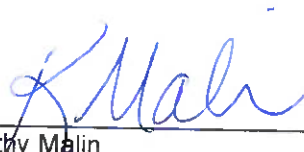
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at both hotels). The Grand Prize was won by Dionne Holland which included 2 nights at the Marriott Albrook Hotel, 2 nights at the Central Hotel and 2 nights in La Coralina Island house in Bocas Del Toro (breakfast included in all 3 hotels). For more travel information to Panama, see Lori's website link on our website or in the *Canal Records*.

Bill asked the past Presidents to stay behind for a picture.

Mike Coffey motioned for the meeting to be adjourned, Margot Jordan seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 am.

  
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Bill McLaughlin  
President

  
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Kathy Malin  
Office Manager