



PANAMA CANAL SOCIETY
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
UF SMATHERS LIBRARIES/FRIENDS OF PCMC MUSEUM
April 6, 2024

At noon, John Nemmers, Program Director & Curator of the Panama Canal Museum, Collection Special & Area Studies Collections University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries, welcomed all the attendees and invited everyone to visit the new Museum exhibit across the hall. John explained that Dean, Judy Russell had a family emergency and could not attend today's luncheon. The University of Florida (UF) is looking forward to more exciting exhibits and recognizing the names of the donors. John thanked the Panama Canal Society (PCS) and the Friends of the Museum then he introduced the PCS President, Bill McLaughlin.

The meeting was called to order by Bill at 12:03 P.M. and he welcomed the 77 attendees and was excited to see the new Panama Railroad Exhibit. He reminded everyone that the UF and the Museum are keeping the Canal Zone alive, and today's meeting is the best event we hold besides the annual reunion. Bill introduced the PCS chaplain, Bill Lane who gave the invocation, followed by a moment of silence for our departed family, friends, members and the military. After the invocation, he introduced Ted Kaufer, our Sergeant of Arms that led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bill introduced the Past Presidents and Board Members present: Bob Russell, P.P; Carl Orvis, 1st VP; Penny Canamas, Director; Mike Young, Director; Bill Lane, Chaplain; Ted Kaufer, Sergeant of Arms; and Kathy Malin, Office Manager. Bill thanked Kathy for her hard work at the office. He also thanked Kathy along with Penny Canamas for coordinating today's meeting. He asked everyone to please read the Gulf Coast meeting minutes that are on everyone's table so we can vote to approve after lunch.

The meeting paused for lunch.

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

Bill asked if everyone read the Gulf Coast minutes. JoElla Deakins motioned to approve the minutes, Carl Orvis seconded, and the motion carried. Bill reminded all to mail in the ballots for the election of the next Executive Board for 2024-2026. The count will be on July 5th at 7:30 am before the annual meeting.

Bill spoke about how the Annual Directory costs between \$10K - \$12K per issue. The Executive Board has discussed the problem and after much study, voted not to publish a separate Annual Directory anymore, but to add the names/addresses/emails as an insert to the December *Canal Record*. We cannot place it on the PCS website because it is sensitive information and there is no way to protect the information. The Bylaws and Canal Zone vital records, which have been published in the Annual Directory are on the website for members to read. Members are urged to contact the PCS office if you have any questions.

Bill spoke about the 2024 annual reunion that will take place from July 3rd – 7th at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando. This year our reunion theme is a "Star Spangled Reunion". All reunion information is in your December and March *Canal Records* and online. Updates will be printed in the June *Canal Record*. You will receive a Schedule of Events flyer at the reunion along with a map. There are dances on Thursday through Saturday along with a Murga before the ball.

The Annual Luncheon prices proposed by the hotel are outrageous at \$55 per plate. After talking with members and the Executive Board, it was decided not to have the luncheon this year. In addition, there is no golf luncheon for the same reason, but an awards ceremony will be held. The Clubhouse will be larger this year and Friday during Happy Hour from 4:00 – 6:00pm, *Shorty and Slim* will be playing on a stage. Then on Saturday from noon to 1:00 P.M., Frankie Pretto will be playing Lucho music as a Salute to Lucho. Michael Escalante stood up and mentioned he liked the luncheon so next year, we could possibly increase reunion or luncheon fees to cover the luncheon costs.

Bob Russell found a government website that states: "A group of more than 170 House Republicans announced last week that, if they had their preferences, the federal government would cease providing annual across-the-board pay increases to its employees and federal workers and retirees would have far less generous benefits." Society members might be struggling in the future.

The Early Bird yearly drawing for those who registered prior to February 8th was drawn. Kevin Brandenburg won 3 free night stay at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort; Sandra Glovich won the upgrade to a suite; and Peter Collins won the \$200 gift card to the two high end hotel restaurants. All donated by Rosen Shingle Creek.



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Hotel rooms are filling up fast and Carl Orvis stated we have met our attrition for our guest room block. Members need to make a reservation now, you can always cancel within 72 hours of check-in. If the attrition is short, the Society would be penalized and have pay the shortfall. By having members fill the hotel rooms allows the PCS use for the convention space without charge. Thank you all who have registered. Bill announced the current registration numbers with 981 registrations; 481 ball tickets; 50 golfers; and 19 vendors as of April 5th.

Some door prizes were drawn by Carl and Penny.

Bill introduced Joe Wood, President of the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection (PCMC). Joe updated all on the Friends membership which started out at 78 members and now in 2024, has reached 186 members. A big thank you to John Nemmers and Betsy Bemis for getting the collection out to the public and recording oral histories. There are 170 oral histories online depicting the stories and history of the Canal Zone.

Joe announced this is the 25th anniversary of the PCMC. PCMC is always looking for donations plus the Friends of the PCMC are hosting another silent auction at the reunion. The team is looking for donations and volunteers to work at the silent auction at this year's reunion. Last year, the silent auction raised \$13K at the reunion and during their fall campaign to match it, they raised \$18K; totaling \$32K raised for the oral history program.

There are 16 PCMC Executive Council members and they lost two members this past year, Robert "Bob" Zumbado, and Mickey Fitzgerald. Mickey is being laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery today and Bob in July. The PCMC Executive Council asked two attendees today to be on the Board and Paul and Patty (Owen) Myers agreed.

Joe then introduced John Nemmers, the curator of PCMC. John complimented all with their dedication and donations to the PCMC. This year, there has been 77 research queries, two scholars received travel grants and there are four UF courses that studies Latin America.

John talked about the oral histories and fund raising for digitizing more materials. John introduced two new UF members, Susan Harris, and Robert Anderson, who are in community relations regarding planning and collecting funds for the museum. It is costly to conduct interviews, transcribe, edit then digitize. To date, there are 174 online interviews with dozens more to transcribe.

John invited all to walk through and view the Panama Canal Zone Railroad Exhibit called, "Track Changes". Next year displays will be focusing on the different jobs people had to put a ship through the canal; for example: line handlers, pilots, tug boats, etc. It will be about their stories.

The gallery visitors have increased in 2022 and 2023. It is open Sunday through Friday and the high traffic hours are between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm. Students use the desks across from the displays as a study hall and they show an interest with the displays as well.

This year the reunion Cultural Seminar will be a trivia game format. Teams will compete in educational and fun games about the Panama Canal beginning at 2:00 pm on Friday. John and Betsy are looking for volunteers along with the ladies organizing the Silent Auction. For donations and/or volunteering, contact Kathy Egolf and Carole Miller.

Bill thanked Joe and John and told the group that there are some PCC Railroad charts from 1936 that are for the taking over on the table. He then thanked all the people for attending and asked if anyone had questions.

Door prizes were drawn.

Joe Wood made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Bev Wood seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

Handwritten signature of Bill McLaughlin in black ink.

Bill McLaughlin, President

Handwritten signature of Kathy Malin in blue ink.

Kathy Malin, Office Manager