



Panama Canal Society Annual General Membership Meeting
Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, Orlando Florida
Reunion 2025 – July 4, 2025

The meeting was called to order by President Carl Orvis at 9:36 a.m. He asked all to turn off cell phones or put on vibrate. Carl welcomed everyone to the 2025 Annual meeting of the Panama Canal Society and have a great Independence Day. He asked the Veterans to stand up and the crowd applauded these men and women. Carl called the meeting to order with a quorum present but with only 142 members.

Carl then introduced Society Chaplain, Bill Lane who gave the Invocation. There was a moment of silence for our departed members, friends and Mr. Rosen, who has supported the Society for years. Next, Carl introduced the Society Sergeant-at-Arms, Ted Kaufer who led the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance:

Carl asked for approval for May 3, 2025, General Membership minutes held in Palmetto, Florida. These minutes were on the seats for the members' review. Bob Russell made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Joan Ohman. Motion carried.

Carl introduced the 2024-2026 Executive Board Members who were present on the dais. Mike Young (1st Vice President); Penny Canamas (2nd Vice President), Dixie Barons (Director), Bosco Hoyte (Director), Cheryl Williams (Director), Kelly Fenton (Director-at-Large), Bill Lane (Chaplin), Ted Kaufer (Sergeant-at-Arms), David Dahlstrom (Legislature Representative), Jacque Vowell (Editor), and Kathy Malin (Office Manager). Absent were Jim Parthenais (Treasurer) and Ray Husum (ByLaws).

He introduced Reunion Hotel Chairpersons, Betty LeDoux and Debbie Lane and thanked our 'runners' who will be distributing the door prizes – Debbie Allen, Ingrid Bryan and Susan Burk.

Then Carl introduced the Past Presidents who were in attendance: Betty LeDoux (1989-1991 & 2000-2002), Bill McLaughlin (2002-2004 & 2020-2024), Bob Russell (2006-2008), Mike Coffey (2014-2018), and Shirley Avery-Bentley (2018- 2020).

Door Prizes were drawn. All door prizes were donated by our Vendors.

Financials:

Carl introduced Kathy Malin, Office Manager, to give the 2024 Financial Report. Kathy showed the 2024 Financial Reports to the members and stated it will be published in October 2025 *Canal Record*. Kathy explained how the Society finally is out of the 'red' and we have a net income of approximately \$11K. In 2024, we had investment income of \$9.9K. These investments are helping our bottom line. The other savings were over \$10.5 in printing and mailing a separate Directory. We will continue to include the Directory in our December *Canal Record*. We also saved \$7K in credit card fees. We are charging the members instead of the Society. Membership is slightly down.

Door prizes were drawn.

President's Report:

Carl encouraged members to sign up their family, friends and classmates and stated this is the member's Society. Carl mentioned we had a ByLaws amendment vote in the March book. The office only received 50



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ballots and with over 1800 members, this is unacceptable. We need members to be more involved and to vote.

Carl spoke about changes to the Florida area picnics. In February, the Space Coast held a successful potluck at the VFW in Cape Canaveral followed by attendees playing “xxx” with the VFW. Everyone had fun and people met the night before for Happy Hour and listened to a Beatles Tribute band. In 2026, we will be contacting the Hilton at Cocoa Beach to reserve a block of rooms. They have a tiki hut on their deck overlooking the beach. We will have the potluck again at the VFW but will host a Happy Hour either the night before or both nights at the Hilton. Carl encouraged people living in colder climates to come down at that time to enjoy the sunshine!

In May, the Florida West Coast picnic was well attended at a community center in Palmetto. People enjoyed the air conditioning, food without bugs and even the pool.

At the Reunion so far, there was one incident where law enforcement was called. Please maintain love for our family, friends and this hotel setting. There are consequences when law enforcement is called. Two members showed off Rosen’s property and will not be able to return during the Reunion.

Carl is looking forward to organizing next year’s Reunion and is honor to be the President.

Door prizes were drawn.

Reunion Reports:

Carl asked Bill McLaughlin to give the Reunion report. Bill stated the Canal Zone is alive and well this week. Bill then thanked all our Reunion sponsors who were University of Florida for Albert Nahmad, Condor Tours and Travel, the Bentley family, Tom Ellis with B&C Financials, Howler Monkey Sauce, Ron Abuelo, Blaze Fast Fire’d Pizza, Baru Highlands Coffee, TraderBrock Rainforest Products, Kelly Fenton, Mike Coffey with LeaderOne Financial Corporation, CanalZone.me, CHS 66, BHS 82, Steve Gilbert’s Buck Dynasty, and an Anonymous donor. Every year, we encourage people and companies to become sponsors. Please call the Society office if you are interested.

Hotel rooms have sold out in the past, but Bill stated he felt the CZ Reunion in January might be hurting our attendance.

Bill indicated the hotel parking is complimentary for hotel guests. Guests not staying at the hotel must pay a fee. He reminded registered attendees that showing your badges will get you 25% off food at most of the hotel restaurants. This discount doesn’t pertain to beverages. Bill stated attendance is down from last year.

Bill announced that after the annual meeting today, there will be a Cultural Seminar at 2:00 pm sponsored by the University of Florida. They are planning to have a Trivia game about the Panama Canal. John Nemmers from UF will provide more information later in this meeting.



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Bill also announced that tonight at the Friday Night dance sponsored by BHS 1980, the band “Aquinas” will perform. Tomorrow during the annual luncheon, we have the pleasure to have author and professor, Wendy Tribaldos, from Panama.

Saturday afternoon there is the 16th Annual Pool Party with free beer until it runs out. Bill continued to announce that Dance tickets and Despedida lottery tickets are on sale during registration hours by the Registration and Vendor rooms. Be sure to purchase a lottery ticket, last year, first prize was over \$1,000 dollars. But you must be present to win on Sunday morning during the Despedida.

Saturday evening will feature the music of the “Salsumba Orchestra” and an Emcee/DJ, Joe Magic and Tech. This is new entertainment and come join the fun. The dance will be from 9 pm – 1 am and the Murga will start at 8:00 pm. Please see the dress code printed on your tickets and the age limitation for attendees. Make sure you pick up a reunion flyer with all the other events and visit the Vendors. Have a great time this weekend.

Bill called Dave Bishop, the Golf tournament director, to give his report. Dave stated there were 64 golfers with Jim Duffus and Ed Malin winning the tournament with a low score of 67. Dave thanked all the sponsors.

Door prizes were drawn.

Other Reports:

Carl stated that Ray Husum, our ByLaws Chair, was unable to attend the Reunion. Carl reported that Amendment #47 passed. With 50 ballots received and 2 blank. It was in the March book regarding disciplinary actions at Society functions.

Carl then stated the Board has been in discussions regarding changing the Society’s ‘not-for-profit’ to ‘non-profit’ status. This will help those donating to write off a tax-deductible donation. He asked the members if they wanted to have a ballot and vote or if the Executive Board can make that decision. Carl asked for a show of hands on each decision. The members voted on the Executive Board to make the decision.

Carl invited Kathy Malin to speak about a new Membership Portal. After the Reunion, the Society will be transferring from the old Access database to a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This new program does have the ability for Kathy to move the information from the old system to the new one. She also can send out mass emails, due reminders, invoices, links to register for events and the Reunion. Kathy stated she is just learning about the different functions. She hopes to have logins for members to maintain and update personal information. There will be a widget on Society’s website to enter the portal and for the first time to enter, a two-factor verification. Members without cells and emails continue as before.

Carl called the curator of the Panama Canal Museum Collection at the University of Florida (UF), John Nemmers, to the podium. John thanked Joe Wood and Kathy Egolf, Friends of Museum President and Vice President, Associate Curator, Betsy Bemis and Dean Judy Russell and for all their support and dedication to the



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Panama Canal Museum Collection (PCMC). John said that Judy is missing the Reunion due to a death in the family.

John stated the Friends of the Museum has 136 members and explained the different levels of membership. In 2024, the Silent Auction raised over \$11K for the museum. He encouraged all to visit the Silent Auction in Gatlin Ballrooms A2 & A3. He thanked all the volunteers, especially Carole Miller and Kathy Egolf. The auction ends on Saturday at 3:30pm. John also thanked Lori Snow of Condor Tours and Travel for organizing this year's cruise to Canada and New England. Her company donates to the museum for each cabin sold.

A fund-raising campaign kicked off last July to support scanning materials from 2024 – 2026. To date, UF raised over \$85K thus they hired a new Imaging Assistant that started in March. He has already scanned in many telephone directories, school programs, journals, Southern Command News & Tropic Times, photographs, Brad Wilde's postcards, etc.

To date, there are 67 research queries, and 7 courses taught at UF on Latin American studies. John invited all to visit the exhibit in Gatlin Ballrooms A2-A3 on "Distinctive Trips through the Ditch". Next Spring, the UF campus will host "An Ensemble Performance at the Panama Canal".

John asked the members to join us at 2:00 pm today for a Trivia game in this same room – Sandlake Room

John stated that Judy Russell has dedicated 18 years to the UF Smathers Libraries. She led the merger with the Panama Canal Museum between 2010-2012. Judy will continue to be involved with PCMC and Society. Carl asked the members if there is a motion for Judy Russell to become an honorary member of the Society. Kathy Egolf motioned for Judy Russell to become an honorary member, Cheryl Russell seconded, and the motion carried.

Carl and Bill McLaughlin honored Judy by giving John a plaque and a painting to take back to Judy Russell.

Door prizes donated by our Vendors then were drawn.

Questions and Comments from the Members:

Kathleen Vogel asked if the new portal could have voting online. Kathy Malin will investigate. Jim Bradley stated he has been attending the Reunion for 65 years. Janice Scott mentioned the Windfall Act. Jim Duffus invited all in the Pacific northwest to attend a picnic in late July. John Husum asked the members to post Reunion pictures on Facebook.

Betty LeDoux announced that this hotel will be having full renovation before next year's Reunion. We will be at this hotel at least for the next 2 years. In 2026, it will be July 8-12. Betty went on to tell the members that Rosen Shingle Creek offers the best room pricing and there is no minimum for food and beverage in the convention center. She stated that the World Marriott Orlando is \$260 a night and the Hilton, Orlando is \$189 per night but their food and beverage minimum is \$100K. The Hilton in Daytona and the Marriott in



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Tampa are too small. Betty even received quotes from the Gaylord in Dallas and all-inclusive resorts in the Caribbean, but their daily room rates are high. Hotels in Panama are too small.

Door prizes were drawn.

The next-door prize was a complimentary 3-night stay at the Reunion this year. Megan Williams won.

The Grand Prize with 6 nights of hotel stays in Panama donated by Lori Snow, Condor Tours and Travels, a long time Reunion sponsor. Ralph Zachry won this prize.

Carl asked the Past Presidents and Board members to stay for photos.

Shirley Camby motioned for the meeting to be adjourned, Paul Karst seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:26 am.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Orvis", written over a horizontal line.

Carl Orvis
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kathy Malin", written over a horizontal line.

Kathy Malin
Office Manager