



PANAMA CANAL SOCIETY
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
UF SMATHERS LIBRARY
March 7, 2020

At 11:50 am, Dean Judy Russell welcomed the attendees and introduced PCS President, Shirley Avery-Bentley.

Meeting was then called to order by Shirley where she welcomed the 56 attendees. Shirley indicated the slideshow was highlighted by the young adorable picture of Frank Townsend.

Shirley introduced the Past Presidents and Board Members present: Bill McLaughlin (Reunion Coordinator), Bob Russell (Legislative Representative), Brittney Wilder (2nd VP), Noreen Hanson (Treasurer), Laura Kosik (Sergeant-at-Arms), and Kathy Malin (Office Manager). She thanked Kathy for her hard work at the office and the event.

Laura Kosik began the Pledge of Allegiance.

Cheryl Russell requested a moment of silence for those members who had just passed away: Julius Little, Tom Duncan and Ken Anderson. She then gave the invocation.

The meeting broke for lunch and resumed at 12:25 p.m.

Shirley asked if all have read the meeting minutes from December General Membership Meeting. Bill McLaughlin made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Bob Russell seconded, and the motion carried.

Shirley called Bill McLaughlin to give an update on the Reunion. Reunion Registration is doing well with lots of registrations. This is going to be a great reunion this year at the Caribe Royale Resort. The registrations came in so fast and furious from the start; we sold out of the Villas. We obtained more and sold them out as well. There are no Villas left to reserve.

Bill spoke about changes and updates for the 2020 Reunion.

Hotel matters:

- Pets are allowed at the Caribe Royale; however, there is a \$150.00 per pet non-refundable deposit. Pet registration and vaccination records required at check-in.
- The Caribe Royale Resort has a hotel parking fee. Attendees at the 2020 Reunion staying the Caribe Royale Resort do not have to pay parking fees. Those not staying at the resort will have to pay a parking fee. The Panama Canal Society has negotiated a lesser fee of \$12.00 + tax per day from the normal \$20.00 + tax per day fee for members not staying at the hotel. So please plan accordingly.
- Free continental breakfast service will be provided on Friday and Saturday to all those registered for the reunion. Breakfast tickets for all REGISTERED MEMBERS will be included in the registration packet which may be picked up during registration hours along with any tickets you may have purchased to the Dances, Annual Luncheon, Painting with a Twist or DJ Dances. The continental breakfast will be served in the Convention Center at the Reunion Clubhouse area and will include a hot breakfast sandwich. You must have your breakfast ticket to participate in the breakfast program; **those without tickets will not be served the complimentary breakfast.** For attendees wishing to have full breakfast, it will be available al-a-carte or buffet style in the restaurants.
- Hours of operation for Registration, Information and Ticket sales has changed this year. So be sure to read your Schedule of Events (SOE).
- No Thursday Night Dance this year. Thursday Night will be Reunion Kick Off Party at the reunion clubhouse and Boca deck. Ron Cortez Cuba Libre Happy Hour starts that night at 6:00 p.m.
- Friday Night Dance "Back to the Pub" will be hosted by BHS Classes of 1975 & 1980. The band *Panama* will be the entertainment for the night.
- The Cultural Seminar will be another great seminar put on by John Nemmers and Betsy Bemis, curators of the Panama Canal Collection at UF.
- Everyone that attended the "PAINTING WITH A TWIST" program last year had such a great time; we are offering



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the program again on Friday afternoon for those artistic and not so artistic folks. This program is a trending activity worldwide and should prove to be a lot of fun for those attending, especially the "Twist" part. There is a fee to cover supply costs. Sign up on the reunion registration form. Cost is \$40.00 and only ages 15 or older can participate.

An updated Schedule of Events and Convention Center floor plan is being published in the March *Canal Record* that you should be receiving in your mail soon. A final SOE will be published in the June *Canal Record* as well as the reunion is a living thing and has changes pop up, especially when going to a new property. A final Reunion Flyer with SOE and layout will be given to all attendees in your registration bag.

Volunteers are needed for many parts of the reunion machine. Laura Kosik is our chief volunteer recruiter. Laura got up to announce that her volunteer system is up and running and to contact her if you want to be a volunteer.

Shirley introduced July Russell and John Nemmers from the UF Smathers Libraries.

Dean Judy Russell welcomed all to visit the new exhibits across the hall. She acknowledged and thanked her UF Smathers Libraries staff for their wonderful and hard work on the exhibits.

John Nemmers introduced himself and explained how the collection was used. John presented a slide show where there was a great increase in traffic from 57,677 in 2018 to 80,049 in 2019. The most visitors were between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. The growth of titles online increased from 1,700 to 1,900. John said there is a steady demand from scholars and school-age students. UF now has 4 courses on the Canal Zone that includes Art History, 2 History courses and a Museum Studies. John introduced Betsy Bemis who is bringing back the Oral History program. She asked for volunteers to sign up for Oral histories at the Reunion. Betsy and John are also conducting the Reunion Cultural Seminar on "Canal Defenders", the Canal's importance to the allies during WWII. They found over 160 comic books on superheroes saving the Canal.

There are 109 members of the Friends. UF decided to change their yearly renewal period from Jan – Dec to start from the day a member signs up.

Joe Wood, President of the Friends of the Executive Committee, thanked Judy, John and the UF staff for their dedicated service. The Friends are doing fine, and the membership is only \$26 a year which amounts to \$2 a pay period. Friends are assisting UF with fundraising and identifying objects. It is a productive organization with the Reunion Silent Auction going on 18 years, but the Friends' volunteers are 'burning out'. They announced the termination of the Silent Auction, however Mickey Fitzgerald volunteered to run the Auction for the next several years. Mickey came up to the podium and announced that she is thrilled and thinks this Auction is worthwhile. She thanked Kathy Egolf and Mickey is looking for volunteers.

Joe stated the Friends have raised over \$100K over the years but they need \$25K for the Oral History program. This covers the costs of recording, editing and transcribing. He appreciated Frank Townsend for organizing the duplicate Roosevelt Medal holders, but that program is terminating soon.

Shirley thanked Mickey for volunteering for the Silent Auction. She announced the March *Canal Record* will be mailed out soon with this year's nominating ballots. Shirley encouraged all to send in their ballots. Door prizes were drawn. The early bird drawing followed with Paul Barkowitz winning the 2 free nights at the Caribe Royale.

Meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.


Shirley Avery, President


Kathy Malin, Office Manager