

CANAL GATOR TALES

August 2023

Silent Auction Raises Record Amount

Thanks to all the volunteers, donors, and bidders who helped make the 2023 Silent Auction one that will provide **over \$13,000 in support of the Panama Canal Museum Collection!** This is a record amount raised by the auctions, and it is a testament to the generosity of our supporters.

These are among the items with the highest bids:

Donor	Item	Top Bid
Barbara McKeown donated three Al Sprague Paintings in memory of her husband, William “Bill” McKeown.		
Barbara McKeown	<i>Sailboat</i>	\$650
Barbara McKeown	<i>Taboga</i>	\$600
Barbara McKeown	<i>Taboga Homes</i>	\$500
Richard Morris	1-\$100 Gold Balboa	\$620
Richard Morris	1-\$20 & 4-\$5 Silver Balboas	\$200
Richard Morris	1-\$20 & 3-\$5 Silver Balboas	\$150
Richard Morris	1-\$20 & 1-\$5 Silver Balboas	\$150
Richard Morris	1-\$20 & 2-\$5 Silver Balboas	\$130
Frank Hawks	4 PCM Christmas Ornaments 2	\$500
Christine Parrish	Colorful Woven Bags <i>Miraflores</i>	\$200
Vivian Simmons	Pencil Drawing	\$200
Hank DeVoll Tinker	2 Lists of CZ Pilots	\$187
H. Cooper Bliss	Madden Dam Historical Plaque	\$180
Morris Huggins	PCC Office Chair	\$175
Christine Parrish	Woven Bag, Framed Frog Art	\$150

Joan Ohman	Guinep Tree	\$120
Joe & Bev Wood	<i>Ship in Locks</i> Print by Al Sprague	\$120
Mickey Fitzgerald	Patio Light with Marbles	\$110

The funds raised by the auction this year will go to support the Oral History Program so that we can continue to document stories of life in the Canal Zone and Panama. Over the past two years, we have held Fall fundraising drives to match the incredible earnings of each auction, and each year our generous supporters have responded by more than doubling our goals. We are hoping to repeat this success in 2023 with a campaign starting October 1st to raise \$12,000. Combined with the auction earnings of \$13,000, this would give us a total of \$25,000 raised for the Oral History Program. We thought that this goal was very fitting considering that this is the 25th anniversary of the founding of the original Panama Canal Museum in 1998. Of course, you do not have to wait until October. If you want to contribute, please visit pcmc.uflib.ufl.edu/oralhistory or contact John Nemmers at jnemmers@ufl.edu. Thank you for your generosity in supporting the collection!



Above: Several cashiers and other volunteers at the closing of the auction—looking none the worse for wear! Front row: Karen Husum Clary, Carol Meyer, Kathy Egolf, and Christine Tirpak. Back row: Jeanne Wagner, Barbara Egolf Dedeaux, Carole Miller, Tracy Dickey, and Mickey Fitzgerald.



Above: The Walker sisters (Mickey Fitzgerald, Jeanne Wagner, and Carole Miller) with their cousin, Donald Humphrey.



Above: Jeanne Wagner enjoys seeing long-time friend, Al Sprague.

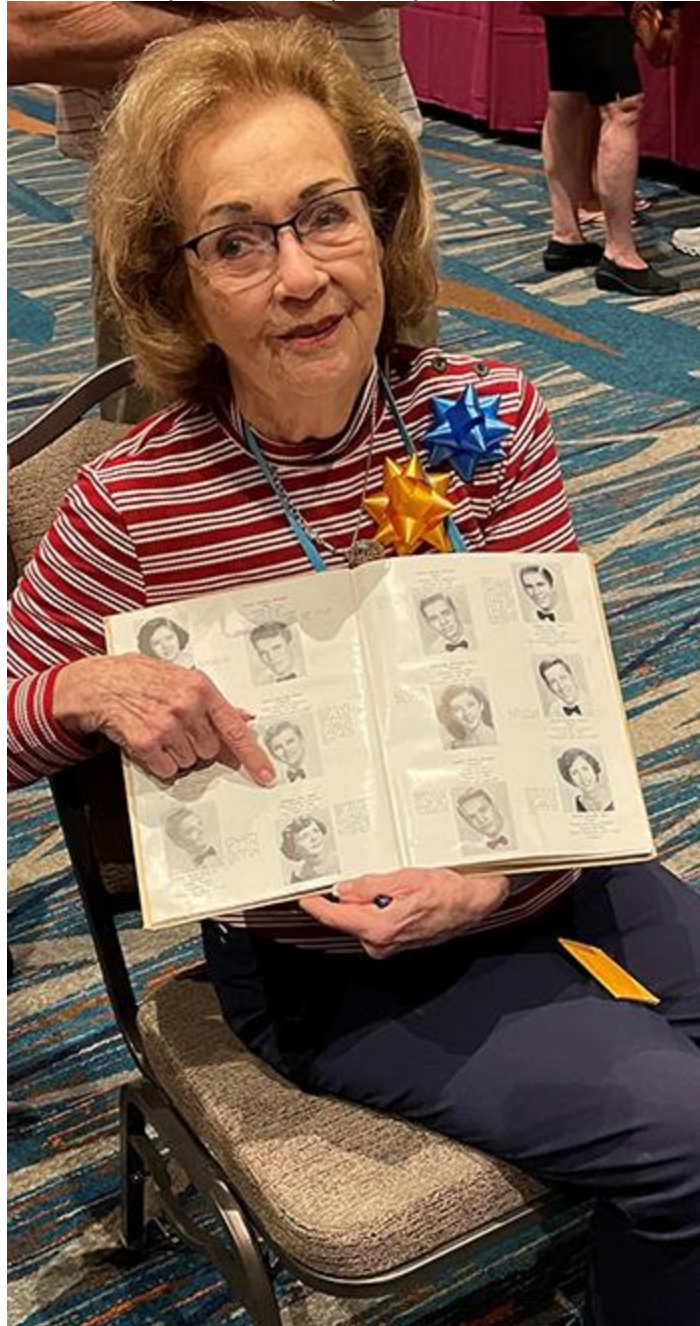


Above: Jackson Vassallo, our youngest auction volunteer and grandson of volunteer Laura Causey, plays “Music to Bid By.”

Celebrating a 70th Graduation Anniversary

Barbara Egolf Dedeaux, Cristobal High School Class of 1953, was surprised at the Panama Canal Society Reunion this year with a special party celebrating her 70th graduation anniversary. Earlier in the year, Barbara casually remarked she didn't know of any others from her small CHS class of 1953 who would be attending their 70th reunion. This spurred sisters Mickey Fitzgerald, Carole Miller, and Jeanne Wagner to plan a surprise party for Barbara, who is a longtime volunteer for the silent auction and supporter of the collection. Friends and family gathered in the Museum room on Thursday July 6, and participants took turns sharing information about what was happening in 1953 and enjoyed seeing Barbara's graduation photo in the yearbook. On Cloud 9 throughout the reunion, Barbara continues to marvel over

the many wonderful friends she had made by volunteering in the Museum room. She sends thanks out to all who planned and participated in the fun!



Barbara is shown here pointing to her photo in the CHS 1953 yearbook given to her by Mickey, Carole, and Jeanne and sporting the blue and gold corsage Margaret McLaughlin made for her.



Attendees at the surprise party. From left to right are Mickey Fitzgerald, John Nemmers, Judy Russell, Debbie Egolf Lane, Bill McLaughlin, Joe Wood, Kelly Fenton, Bev Wood, Karen Husum Clary, Joan Ohman, and Ed Ohman.

25th Anniversary of the Panama Canal Museum

This year is the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Panama Canal Museum in 1998. To honor this event, we are happy to share excerpts of a brief history written by Joe Wood, President of PCMC Friends, entitled *How the Museum Got Started*: In the President's message in the September 1985 edition of the Canal Record, Adrian "Kibby" Bouche, was listed as chair of the Museum Committee, which was established for the purpose of exploring the feasibility of creating a museum to be operated under the auspices of the Society. This was the beginning of the Panama Canal Society's effort to create a museum to preserve Panama Canal and Canal Zone history. While there was some initial interest, the effort never got off the ground. In the June 1986 Canal Record, the President's message stated: "Bouche completed a very comprehensive investigation on the needs and requirements involved in the establishment of a Panama Canal Museum... concluding with the finding that, even with reducing the scope, it is an overwhelming project for a Society relying on volunteers, in addition to requiring a considerable outlay of funds. As a result, the Panama Canal Society's Panama Canal Museum project has been terminated."

In May 1997, Chuck Hummer called me and asked if I would like to help form a museum to preserve the history of the U.S. in Panama before the U.S. turned over the Canal. Chuck and Davis Stevenson had been concerned that the history of the U.S. presence in the Canal Zone and the institutional memory of the many people who had lived there and worked for the Panama Canal would be lost once the U.S. transferred the Canal. Chuck was an officer of the Society and wanted the support of the Society in the creation of the museum. Recognizing the past efforts of Kibby Bouche to enlist the support of the Society, Chuck asked me if I could prepare a comprehensive prospectus and feasibility study that would assess the viability of starting and successfully operating a museum and present a business plan and recommendation to the Society for their endorsement of a museum. Having been involved in numerous civic activities while working for the Panama Canal, and not really wanting to re-engage, I begged off. Chuck was very persuasive, however, making the case that no one else is going to preserve our history if we don't do it

ourselves. I spent the better part of 1997 and the early part of 1998 preparing the study and concluded that, while it would be a major undertaking to start and operate a museum, it appeared that there could be a strong underpinning of support from the more than 4,000 Society members and others who had an interest in preserving their unique history, and that membership could form the foundation for our endeavor.

Chuck presented the prospectus to the Society Board, with a favorable recommendation to move forward. The board felt that the museum should be established as a completely separate organization so as not to obligate the Society to an outlay of funds that could drain its reserves. At the same time, Betty LeDoux arranged with an attorney to draft a constitution and by-laws for the museum. On March 15, 1998, the museum organization, named the Panama Canal Society Foundation (although not connected in any way to the Society), was formally established and registered as a Florida Non-Profit Corporation. In July of that year, the first organizational meeting was held in Orlando in conjunction with the Reunion. A small group of about 25 people attended the meeting and all vowed to support the effort. Most in the audience immediately pledged donations (several of \$1,000 or more). The founding officers were: President, Joe Wood; Vice President, Betty LeDoux; Executive Vice President, Chuck Hummer; Treasurer, Nancy Van Siclen; Secretary, Marie Wright Gibson.

Our first formal meeting took place on September 25 and 26, 1998, over a weekend in Tampa, and allowed us to spend time organizing and mapping out our goals and objectives. On March 18, 1999, we received our formal approval from the IRS to operate as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, which allowed museum purchases to be tax-exempt and contributions to be tax deductible - an important milestone triggering increased contributions.

For more information on the history of the Museum, please visit go.ufl.edu/pcm.



***Cutting Edge* Exhibition Now Online**



An online version of our current exhibition in the **Albert H. Nahmad Panama Canal Gallery** is available via the PCMC Exhibits webpage: <https://pcmc.uflib.ufl.edu/exhibits/>. The *Cutting Edge* exhibition examines the engineering of the Panama Canal's construction, including the innovations in materials and technology that enabled the U.S. to complete a project of monumental scale in a time frame that many thought impossible. The exhibition also explores the engineering aspects of alternative and new canals across Panama that were proposed throughout the 20th century, as well as the new locks and expansion completed in 2016. If you are interested in visiting the UF campus to view the exhibition in person, please contact John Nemmers at jnemmers@ufl.edu.



Hometown Memories at the Reunion



Thanks to everyone who joined us in Orlando for the Cultural Seminar at this year's reunion, which focused on the personal memories of individuals who lived in the Canal Zone and Panama during the American Era of the Panama Canal. Panelists Marvel Townsend, Fred Lee, and Reggie Hayden shared stories about their experiences in their communities - everything from schooling and recreational activities to food and housing. In conjunction with the seminar, we also had a special interactive exhibit of townsite maps in the Museum room. Visitors were able to write on the maps, which were reproduced from telephone books, and indicate where they lived and worked or noting other locations that were special to them. The recording of the seminar and all of the maps (with handwritten notes) will be made available online as part of the digital collection (dloc.com/collections/pcm).

Cruise to Hawaii in 2024!

Since 2004, the Panama Canal Museum and the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection have arranged exciting fundraising cruises each year to support the collection. In 2024, join us on a cruise to Hawaii on Norwegian Cruise Line's Pride of America. The 7-day inter-island cruise starts at Honolulu with stops at Kahului, Hilo, Kona, and Nawiliwili. For every cabin booked our travel agent, Condor Tours & Travels, will make a donation to UF in the name of the PCMC Friends. We are indeed grateful to Lori Snow and Condor Tours & Travels for their generous support of the collection! Contact Lori Snow via email at lori@condortt.com or call 770-339-9961 for more information.

Friends Memberships

If you haven't done so already, now is a good time to renew your membership in the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection at UF. If you are not a member already, please consider joining!

The funds collected are used to support education and research through the preservation, conservation, digitization, and processing of the collection. Funds also support the creation and development of local, traveling, and online exhibits that increase awareness about the collection, the Panama Canal, the Canal Zone, and its people.

We maintain these efforts through the support of friends like you when you join or renew your membership. Dues and donations qualify for tax deductions. Thank you for your continued support of the PCMC at UF. To join or renew membership in the Friends of the Panama Canal Museum Collection visit <https://apps.uflib.ufl.edu/pcmmembership/> or call 352-273-2505 for more information.



SAVE THESE DATES

October 1-December 22, 2023

Fall campaign to raise \$12,000 for the Oral History Campaign.

Ongoing thru March 2024

Cutting Edge exhibition in the Albert H. Nahmad Panama Canal Gallery at UF, which examines the engineering of the Panama Canal. Visit <https://pcmc.uflib.ufl.edu/exhibits/>.

September 14-21, 2024

Join the Friends of the PCMC for a 7-day inter-island NCL cruise from Honolulu, September 14-21. Prices start at \$1,647 per person. Contact: Lori Snow (lori@condortt.com or via phone at 770-339-9961).