

Talking with Gerry McNabb, the outgoing CMC President - 01/04/2006

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*If you go to the IMDB (Internet Movie Database) website and check out **Being Peter Sellers** and go all the way down the list, you will see the name of our president, Gerry McNabb*

*<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt007884>
The movie was filmed at the Biltmore the late 70s.*

Gerry remembers that he had what was supposed to have been a speaking role. “I rode shotgun in the limo for the limo driver played by Jack Warden. I spoke a good line to Peter Sellers and Melvyn Douglas in the entrance hall of the estate, but like I said, sure, that scene ended up somewhere else. I was cutting room floor, but I am still in the picture.” However, he believes that his experience is what inspired the careers of his kids in film. His daughter is a model and commercial actor in Hollywood and his youngest son is a set dresser there for over 10 years. “That exposure to the film industry is what gives my son his photographic edge now as a commercial photographer.”

Gerry was born in Dallas, a seventh generation Texan and moved to Huntington, Long Island when he was 10 years old. Gerry’s mother was a painter and both Gerry and his mother studied art with George Grosz, a Jewish-German painter who lived in the same town. After Gerry graduated from Dartmouth in 1956, he joined the Navy. Instead of traveling all over the world on a ship, as he had hoped, he spent his two years at the Pentagon. “Sometimes I would take a mail pouch to the White House. That was the extent of my travel.”

He became advertising manager for Blue Cross of Tennessee and then joined the marketing department of a firm that made cellophane packaging in Pisgah Forest. Later Gerry and his business partner founded Price/McNabb advertising agency in Asheville where he dealt with the creative side of advertising.

Gerry joined CMC in 1963 and became president in 1972, following Jim “Pop” Hollandsworth. He recalls that at that time, the club did the quarterly schedule at board meetings. “We could fill up most of the room with people right in the room,” Gerry recalls. He instituted Wednesday hikes to incorporate more hikers in Hendersonville.

At the time, CMC had a club cabin at Big Ivy Campground. The Forest Service owned a house that they used so they rented it to the club for \$25 a year if CMC would take care of it and put on a new roof. Gerry remembers that “the club would use it for summer picnics and hikes to Douglass Falls. Unfortunately, due to increased vandalism to the cabin, CMC gave it up in 1976. The cabin is still standing empty.” The club also had slide shows every quarter. Members would bring a few slides of their vacations and it was another chance for people to get together. Serious photographers like Bernard Elias, Bill Kirkman and others were the highlight of these shows.

Gerry moved to Austin, Texas in 1980 and eventually found his way to the Sierra Club. At the time, the local Chapter had an active hiking program, though by CMC standards, they did not do a very thorough job. Gerry recalls that leaders sometimes did not scout their hikes. The hikes were poorly planned and leaders were

occasionally lose their way. However he was quite taken by Paula, the Chapter president, and they married in 1994.

Gerry retires and comes back to Asheville

When Gerry and Paula retired in 2000, they moved to Asheville. “Two factors drew me back to Asheville,” Gerry said. “The College for Seniors and CMC.” Gerry is now teaching a “Travel Journaling for Artists” for CFS this coming winter term (2006). He continues his three favorite activities: hiking, art and photography. “I went digital years before it became popular. My first digital camera had 1/3 megapixels of resolution.”

When he left the area, he had turned over the *Let's Go* newsletter to Jane Blodgett. Twenty years later, when Gerry returned to CMC, Jane was still editor and said “I’m glad you’re back. Here”, and handed the responsibility right back to him. Because of a hiccup in the line of succession in the CMC presidency, Gerry became vice-president under Don Walton and then president this past year. While president, Gerry negotiated the gift certificates from Diamond Brand. “It’s a good way for them to get people through their doors.”

What new activities and challenges do you envision for CMC?

I would like to see more socializing, maybe a summer event. [*Editor's note: Gerry is the second person that I interviewed that suggested this. Anyone want to organize it?*] I would also like to revive the slide shows, though of course now, they would be digital slide shows.

My main concerns are about managing growth. We now have about 700 members. How will we manage when we have 7,000? We will need more hikes and therefore more hike leaders. I also want to give another person a chance to become newsletter editor so I will be looking for a co-editor. Paula and I travel a lot but I will continue to help with CMC publicity. I am pleased to turn over the presidency to someone as capable as Lenny.