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

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If you go to the IMDB (Internet Movie Data Base) website and check out Being There, Peter Sellers and go all the way down the cast list, you will see the name of our outgoing president, Gerry McNabb. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt007884

The movie was filmed at the Biltmore estate in the late 70s.

Gerry remembers that he had what was supposed to have been a speaking role as Woltz. “I rode shotgun in the limo for the President, played by Jack Warden. I spoke a greeting to Peter Sellers and Melvyn Douglas in the entrance hall of the estate, but like many, I am sure, that scene ended up somewhere on the cutting room floor, but I am still in the picture.” However, he believes that his experience is what interested two of his kids in film careers. His daughter is a model and commercial actor in Hollywood and his youngest son was 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 13 years old. Gerry’s mother was a painter and both Gerry and his mother studied art with George Grosz, a famous Jewish-German painter who lived in the same town. After Gerry graduated from Dartmouth in 1956, he went into 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 travels.”

He became advertising manager for Blue Cross of Tennessee and then joined the marketing department of a firm that made cellophane packaging in Pisgh 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 noted that at that time, the club did the quarterly schedule at board meetings. “We could fill up most of the three months of hikes with people right in the room,” Gerry recalls. He instituted Wednesday hikes to incorporate a group of hikers in Hendersonville.

At the time, CMC had a club cabin at Big Ivy Campground. The Forest Service owned a house that they use 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 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 Gerry 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 Austin 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 w
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 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.