

ALONG THE TOWPATH

VOLUME IV NUMBER 1

October 1972

NEW LEVEL WALKER CHAIRMAN

Captain Thomas Hahn, USN, has retired from the Navy and has accepted a position with the National Park Service. His title is Staff Assistant for the Restoration and Interpretation of the C & O Canal. His office is at the Great Falls (Maryland) Museum. He and Nat are living in Lockhouse 6. Their address is: P.O. Box 638; Glen Echo, Maryland 20768. Their telephone number is (301) 229-7838. Tom is continuing as President of the American Canal Society and will be happy to correspond about the ACS.

Because of his work with the Canal, Tom has been asked to resign as Level Walker Chairman. The officers of the C & O Canal Association and Tom have asked me, Bruce W. Wood, to take over the Chairmanship and I have accepted. My wife (Sherry) and I are Level Walkers assigned to Section 62, the Oldtown Level. We are relatively new at being Level Walkers and I am even newer at being Chairman, so any suggestions you may have, even those you have already submitted to Tom, will be appreciated.

My address is: 6200 Winnebago Road; Bethesda, Maryland 20016. The telephone numbers are: Home (301) 229-5182 and Work (202) 632-8516.

I would like to have the opportunity to meet all of the Level Walkers and, hopefully, to walk each person's section with him or her.

LEVEL WALKER MEETING ANNOUNCED

The May 1972 issue of "Along the Towpath" indicated an interest in holding a meeting of Level Walkers especially to talk about our purpose, to get to know each other, and to learn more about the Canal. I have arranged for, and sent out notice to all Level Walkers of, a meeting in Paw Paw, West Virginia on October 28. I would appreciate comments from interested parties about the time of year, schedule, day of the week, etc. for future meetings. This year's meeting is to start at 10:00 a.m. at the Mountaineer Restaurant in Paw Paw and it is open to Level Walkers and persons interested in becoming Level Walkers.

THE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

The Level Walker newsletter, "Along the Towpath," was put out solely by Tom and Nat Hahn over the past few years. When I accepted Level Walker Chairmanship, I made clear that I do not have time to put out the newsletter as Tom did in addition to being Chairman. Present arrangements call for the assistance of Lynn and Judy DeHart, of Cumberland, to reproduce and distribute the newsletter I send them.

This newsletter is going to all paid-up Association members, in accord with the agreement reached in last April's Annual Meeting. The Association is paying for it from the current dues of its members at no extra charge, at least for the present. Since the Association is paying to put it out and everyone is receiving it, perhaps the news provided therein should come from more sources than simply the Level Walkers. As Level Walker Chairman, I expect I will continue to orient the news toward items of interest and concern to Level Walkers. An arrangement can easily be worked out to

include the services of a volunteer who would incorporate other news of interest to all Association members. While awaiting such a volunteer, I will do my best to get the newsletter out on a convenient schedule, although not necessarily a regular schedule.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE REQUEST

The National Park Service is attempting to determine the earliest date on which concrete work was done on the Canal. I have been requested to ask all Level Walkers to look at any concrete works in their sections and to notify me of the dates found thereon. This includes locks, aqueducts, waste weirs, buildings, etc. pertaining to Canal operations. You should advise me of the mileage and type of structure and the date(s) appearing thereon. Any other information inscribed in the concrete might also be useful. I will pass this information along to the National Park Service. You are not expected to make a special report to provide this information.

LEVEL WALKER ASSIGNMENTS

I understand that some Level Walkers have asked Tom to re-assign them to another section for various reasons. I may or may not have received or noted all of these requests, so if any person wishes to be re-assigned, please advise me in your next (or later) communication with me, and I will see what I can do to accomodate you. Most of the sections between Georgetown and Harpers Ferry are well filled, so you will have to bear with me if you wish to move into that area.

Tom was beginning to make a practice of assigning two Level Walkers to each section, where it was practical. I intend to continue this practice, and in some cases perhaps assigning three persons to a section if all three definitely want that and no other section. I would, of course, prefer to have all sections covered by at least one Level Walker before doubling up on any section, but that is not always practical. I will get out a new listing of Level Walkers in the near future and I would advise co-Level Walkers to contact each other to see if they might split the responsibilities time-wise or topic-wise. If any of you do not like the idea of sharing your section with someone, please let me know and I'll make special note of the fact.

TROPICAL STORM AGNES AND THE C&O CANAL

Tropical Storm Agnes really did a job to the lower portion of the Canal in June 1972. From Georgetown to Hancock she eroded the towpath; dewatered watered sections; took away outhouses, benches, tables, and some of the shanty towns along the river; and generally created a big mess. The Town of Seneca was again washed away by the flood (in September 1971 Seneca Creek took out much of the town and an arch in the aqueduct, but the aqueduct survived with no further damage. (Part of Seneca was again under water on October 8, 1972 with back-up water from the Potomac River as a result of the rains of the previous Friday.) The Monacacy and Conococheague Aqueducts were slightly damaged. The Widewater Section (mile 13) probably suffered the worst, with a 100 yard break (and another, lesser, break slightly downstream) in the towpath wall. The value of well-established vegetation was re-iterated in many reports.

A number of Level Walkers turned out in response to a request by Russell Dickenson, Director, National Capital Parks. He asked that each person survey his section, take pictures, and submit a report of the damage caused by Tropical Storm Agnes. I summarize below the reports of which I have copies. These reports were written between June 30 and August 15, so many observations noted have changed by now.

1. Tidal Lock to Old Boat Incline (0.0), Rae T. Lewis, despite a sprained ankle, reported several downed trees, both in Georgetown and farther out, a missing foot bridge (the Mule Bridge is all right), damage to the Tidal Lock, but none to the other four locks, whose gates were opened before the flood, no damage to the barge, a partial washout of the towpath below the Old Boat Incline, and a complete washout of towpath and railroad just above the Incline.
2. Old Boat Incline to Lock 5 (2.1), Bill Johnson informed Rae of some of the damage which she incorporated with appropriate credits in her report. Mr. Johnson, however, passed away during the summer, following a long illness. His section has been taken over by Miss Anne B. Watson.
3. Lock 5 to Cabin John Creek (5.0), Phil Stone reported eleven trees down in a half-mile stretch of his section. Two of the six bridges were washed away, erosion was serious on the lock spillways but the locks fared well, the towpath surface was missing, there were partial washouts, and no picnic tables survived. Grant Conway reported the discovery of a large rusty pickhead at the feeder canal from Little Falls Dam. He noted that the pigeons roosting in the Lock 5 bridge appear to be undamaged, but the beaver colony in the area seems to have disappeared.
4. Cabin John Creek to Lock 14 (7.5), Ken Phifer reported more missing towpath surface, a break below Lock 8, debris indicating 8 to 10 feet of water above the towpath, and missing bridges. The water level between Locks 8 and 13 was normal on June 30 and the towpath intact, but rough.
7. Great Falls to Swains Lock (14.3), John Anderson advised that no bicycling was possible, the towpath surface was in poor shape, and trees were down everywhere. His wildlife reports were encouraging, indicating that they somehow escaped much damage.
12. Sycamore Landing to Edwards Ferry (27.2), Bill Clague reported many mosquitos (as do other Level Walkers), the Sycamore Landing bridge was in the canal bed, the towpath was soggy but in reasonably good shape, about 25 trees were down, no bicycling was possible, the Chisel Branch Hiker-Biker had a second outhouse, courtesy of the Edwards Ferry river community, and one of the shantys was sitting squarely on the towpath. Virgil Smirnow made a similar report of the damage and added that the flora and fauna were reasonably abundant. He reported only one structure still on its supports at Edwards Ferry. The Canal-related buildings fared well.
13. Edwards Ferry to Ft. Harrison Is. (30.8), Constant Southworth reported only superficial damage to his section, with the wooden bridge and remains of the aqueduct at Broad Run still standing.
- 13 and 14. Edwards Ferry to Whites Ferry (30.8), Morris Green, Jr. reported on these sections on his own initiative - thanks Morris, we appreciate this kind of assistance. His report echoed Constant's, noting that trees were down all along the sections. He reported no washouts, but noted many craters and obstructions on the towpath.
15. Whites Ferry to Lock 26 (35.5), Woody Kennedy noted a large obstruction of debris upstream of Whites Ferry. He also reported debris 14 feet above the towpath, two culverts with holes in them, missing bridges (including the Lock 26 bridge), and some goldfish - he wonders if they came from Lily Pons.
16. Lock 26 to Monacacy Aqueduct (39.4), Anson Courter reported minor damage to Lock 26, an enlarged hole in the culvert at mile 39.63, a few breaks in the towpath, and very little damage where trees were left standing along the towpath.
17. Monacacy Aqueduct to Nolands Ferry (42.2), Ray Teele attempted to reach Nolands Ferry on June 24 but was forced away by the flood waters. He reported a building sitting on the Canal access from the parking lot at Monacacy Aqueduct, some of the aqueduct railing in the river, some dangling over the edge. The large dead oak at 42.90 referred to in Tom's guide book fell with the storm.

19. Point of Rocks to Catoctin Aqueduct (48.2), Lyman Stucker noted that the old pivot bridge at Point of Rocks appeared to be undamaged, but the house on the river side of the Canal was devastated. The Catoctin Aqueduct is still intact, as fragile as ever.

21. Brunswick to Weverton (55.0), Albert Swann, Jr. repeated the downriver saga - towpath surface missing, the shanty-town destroyed, trees down, etc. He noted a break in the berm bank at mile 57.

23. Harper's Ferry to Dam No. 3 (60.7), Grant Conway noted that "Roy W. Hauser ("in my 80's") who was present, reported break (0.12 miles above Lock 34) as in same location as during 1936 flood." Footbridges and outhouses were washed away when the river came in at the Dam 3 feeder canal and went out below Lock 33, taking 150 yards of the Towpath with it. The waste weirs at all of the locks were damaged.

28. Shepherdstown to Lock 39 (72.8), John Frye noted light damage to his section, but again we hear of missing bridges.

30. Snyders Landing to Lock 40 (76.7), Harold Cramer, Sr., reported that the high water was only four feet above the towpath at Snyders Landing. Occasional mud holes, top surface of the towpath missing, and the truck bridge across Lock 40 being missing were his main points.

31. Lock 40 to Marsh Run Culvert (79.4), Harold Cramer, Jr. and William Cramer reported much debris between the river and the Canal, boats swamped, and the outhouse at 81.5 moved about 100 yards. The water level above the towpath was back up to ten feet in parts of this section.

32. Marsh Run Culvert to Dam No. 4 (81.6), John DeLean said many trees were down, but none completely blocked the towpath, erosion of the towpath surface was common, biking was impossible, at no point did the towpath wash out, and the bridge was missing at 81.6.

34 and 35. Charles Mill to Lock 43 (91.0), Charles Otstot reported fallen trees, washed-out towpath, missing bridges, some damage to Lockhouse 43, and water nearly to the top of McMahon's Mill waterwheel. An outhouse in his section was washed onto the towpath, but he and seven Boy Scouts were unable to pick it up.

38. Williamsport to Pinesburg Station (99.3), Mel Kaplan and Harry Turner reported some damage to Conococheague Aqueduct, but no towpath breaks, some debris on the towpath, and badly damaged summer property.

Above Section 38, I have reports on Sections 53 (mile 140.9, John Urquhart), 59 (mile 156.3, John Chandler), and 62 (mile 164.8, Bruce and Sherry Wood), none indicating significant damage to the towpath or Canal. Section 62 is normally watered, but the wood-and-earth dam in Lock 68 washed out after the storm.