May 21, 2003

Zoning Commission for the District of Colombia
441 4th Street
Washington, D. C. 20001

Dear Madam Chairman and Commissioners:

I am one of those who signed up but did not get to make a presentation at the hearing session on Case No. 02-30 on May 19. Since I will be out of the country on June 6, I am enclosing copies of a prepared statement in opposition to the proposal which I respectfully request be entered in the record on my behalf as an individual.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Ken Rollins

Kenneth S. Rollins
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Encl: 10 cc. statement

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 232

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.232

Re: Case #02-30

I am Ken Rollins, formerly of Brookmont, MD. I have been involved with the C & O Canal for 52 years. I was not quite a charter member of the C & O Canal Association, but I walked with Justice Douglas for thirteen of the seventeen years, as he liked to put it, to "walk a National Park into existence." I lived for thirty years opposite lock 6. I have traveled its length seven times in continuous hikes and many times over in segments. I have a pair of hiking boots with somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 towpath miles, I have worn out one or more bicycles on the towpath, and I have canoed the Potomac many times.

In his challenge to the editors of the Washington Post in 1954, Justice Douglas described the Canal in part as "a long stretch of peace and quiet at the Capital's back door," and once said that "it was an accident of history that it is there, but there she is, and we ought to do something about it" [to preserve it as a National Park]. Most interested people know the struggle to avoid turning the canal to a roadway or to flood it with mainstream dams on the Potomac, but at last it became the C & O Canal National Historical Park in 1971. I stress the word HISTORICAL because otherwise it would not be a National Park at all.

The enabling legislation defined the Park by reference to a map which had not been seriously reviewed, and thus supplemental legislation was required to round out its borders and ensure its integrity. Likewise the taking lines included privately held properties which would have better incorporated into the Park. It has been the policy of the Park to absorb these properties wherever possible by allowing in-holding or grandfather agreements to lapse. Other properties have been subject to negotiation with the ultimate objective of eliminating private usages within the Park. The proposed "boathouse," for a private benefit would fly in the face of Park policy and all its efforts.

At the other end of the Park, at its upper end, the view upstream is a bridge with a pleasant city skyline behind it. This view is almost duplicated by that from the "incline" level about mile 2 toward Key Bridge at mile 1. This is most certainly a historical view – a famous historical view – which would be completely obliterated by the proposed "boathouse." Nowhere, from one end of the Park to the other, is there or has ever been such an intrusion on the view from the towpath.

Let history live!

In June 1980 I was privileged to walk down the canal with George Elwood Zimmerman of Emstville, Md. who worked on his daddy's boat until he went to the Army in WW I. He had not been back along the Canal in all those years. The rest of the party were a park ranger and a candidate for a doctorate in folklore at the University of Pennsylvania. We were careful not to ask leading questions, but were content to just listen to his recollections. When we rounded the last curve where Key Bridge and the Georgetown waterfront came into view he stopped. After a long silent pause, he finally said, "it's just like it was."

Please, let history live.

Ken Rollins
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