Re Case #0230/~~021~~

I am Ken Rollins, formerly of Brookmont, Maryland. I have been involved with the C & O Canal for 52 years. I am not quite a charter member of the C & O Canal Association, but I walked with Justice Douglas for thirteen of the seventeen years to, as he liked to put it, "walk a National Park into existence." I lived for thirty years opposite Lock 6. I have traveled the entire length seven times in continuous hikes and many times over in segments. I have a pair of hiking boots with well over 1,000 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 on another occasion said "it's been 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 people who are interested know about the struggle to avoid turning the canal into a roadway or flooding it with mainstreams 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 surrounded or abutted some private holdings which would have better been incorporated directly into the Park. It has been the policy of the Park to absorb these properties by allowing in-holding or grandfather agreements to lapse wherever possible; 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.

Let history live!

At the other end of the Park, at mile 184.5, the view upstream is a bridge with a pleasant city skyline behind it. This historical view is almost duplicated by that from the "incline" level above 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 and intrusion on the view from the towpath.

INSERT >

Please, let history live!

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 354
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.354

INSERT

In June 1980 I was privileged to walk the entire Canal with George Elwood Zimmerman who worked on his father's boat until he joined the army in WW I "to get off that boat." 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 to let him recall as he would. When we rounded the last bend and Key bridge and the Georgetown waterfront came into view, he stopped. After a long pause he said "It looks just like it did."