

November 10 Special Member Meeting — report

A special, well-attended Member meeting convened at Roxy-Ann Winery on Tuesday, November 10. Twenty-six voting Members participated (62% of all voting members) and



Gene Abell (above) and Jason Reno (below) presenting plans to Members



heard presentations by the chairmen of two Board committees which were in accord with Members' directive at the August 6 Annual Meeting.

Gene Abell, chair of the Keep the Building Committee/Option 1, presented that option and Jason Reno, chair of the Sell the Building and Relocate Committee/Option 2, shared that committee's thinking. Both plans drew many questions and discussion followed by a written ballot vote. Club

bookkeeper Julie McLaughlin and Club Member Chad Day tabulated the votes and reported the close results which set the course for the Club's next steps: 14 in favor of Option 2 and 12 in favor of Option 1.

The Board met two days later to begin implementing the Members' decision to sell our building and appointed two committees to deal with two parties who have expressed interest in purchasing it. Greg Koenig is chairing the committee exploring a sale to the Holly Theatre) and Jason Reno chairs the committee negotiating with the second party, the owner of the Elks Building.

The Board's goal is to achieve an early sale in order to relieve the Club of the costs of maintaining a closed building and to secure sufficient cash to allow suspending all Member dues until the Club re-opens in new quarters. [\[See U Club 2021 on page 4\]](#)



In This Issue

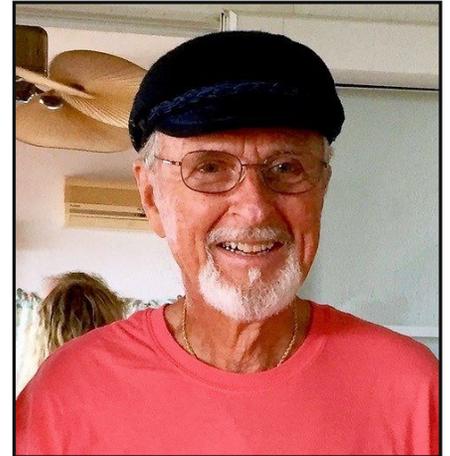
- [November 10 Meeting — report](#)
- [Spotlight — Art Ekerson](#)
- [The U Club 2021](#)

member

SPOTLIGHT

Art Ekerson

Art Ekerson looked young and healthy when he made an accidental “butt call” on FaceTime, as he connected from his winter home in Kihei on the Hawaiian island of Maui. He was getting ready to send your editor a copy of the remarks he made at the service for fellow Club member Jack Day. “I goofed,” he said, muttering something about updating the Contacts list on his iPhone.



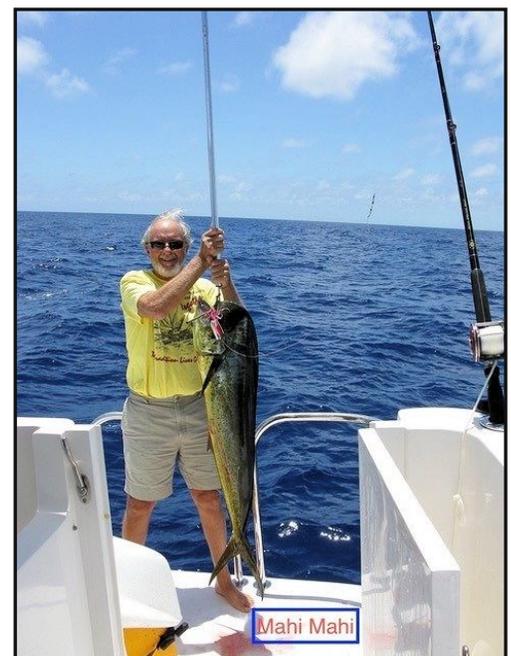
Art’s life story includes lots of evidence that he has always been an “early adopter,” a phrase people use to describe people who are innovative by nature. Stories he told at Jack’s service about himself and Jack, his boyhood neighbor on Groveland Avenue, involved being the very first people to use a jetboat on the Rogue River, going upstream from Gold Beach to Grants Pass in one *very* long day, hampered by a hole in the back of the boat, getting stuck at a portage spot and blocking river traffic, and drinking way too much at Agness. Art was also an early leader in the arena of ski recreation in Southern Oregon back, he said, when very few people skied. He also got local, regional, and national visibility as an early adopter in the care and breeding of llamas. More about llamas later.

Art attended Roosevelt Elementary, two years ahead of Jack, then attended the sole Medford Junior High, and graduated from Medford High School’s classic building on Oakdale Avenue in 1953. He declined to talk about misbehavior but said he and his friends would hang out at the Coffee Pot and Henry’s Restaurant on North Riverside, two establishments on either side of what is now the OK Market. He said the French fries with gravy at the Coffee Pot were a favorite. He remembers Boy Scout Troop 3 and getting his Eagle Scout badge. He said he “didn’t date, though, not until my Junior year in High School” and then I went to all the school dances. “I never missed a dance. I took lessons at the Rogue Valley Country Club.” He said the music was the Glen Miller “Big Band” style of music, before Elvis and Rock and Roll.

He first attended college at the University of Oregon, then Southern Oregon College, and then back to the U. of O. He spent two years in the Army, serving in Japan as an instructor for rock climbing, skiing, and survival.

His long career was split between the roofing business from April to September, and running a ski shop from September through March. “September was crazy. It was the last month to finish roofing jobs and it was the start of the ski-equipment-buying season.” He operated that ski shop for 31 years. Over the years he began buying apartments. “My father strongly advised me not to own apartment rentals, but I did it anyway, and have owned them ever since. Storage units are easier than residences,” he advises.

[continued next page]



[Spotlight continued] Art's heartwarming talk at Jack Day's service mentioned the annual trips he made to sail in the San Juan Islands with Jack, the airplane accident that came from landing a plane in deep snow, also with Jack, the hunting trips and adventures in Alaska, and the fact that he was best man for both of Jack's weddings, and Jack was best man for both of his.

Art got into the llama business when his wife bought him one as a birthday present. It was an exotic pet. By happy coincidence Grants Pass was the home of a national llama show and Art entered his male llama in the show where it won Grand National Champion. His phone began ringing from llama owners who wanted to bring their female to be bred—at \$1,000 per visitor. That turned into a real business.

After a time he and his wife, Jean, had enough, and they auctioned off their entire llama herd, and bought a sailboat, planning a major lifestyle change. They found one in Florida and bought it. The very next day they got a call from a llama importer who said he wanted to sell everything, and that he had fresh bloodlines from Bolivia. Art said he couldn't resist the opportunity, travelled the next day to see what the seller had, bought a bunch of llamas, and was back in the llama business all over again. Eventually they sold everything a second time.

For decades Art has spent six months sailing in the Caribbean and six months in Medford. First he had a sailboat, then but later a power boat. His third and final boat was a 55 foot Pilothouse Motor Yacht. The boat was his home and they were on it six months at a time. He lives at the Rogue Valley Manor, but thanks to COVID and his love for being in a warm place in winter, he says he is rarely there.

When he called from Maui he said he had just finished walking two miles. He climbed Mt. McLaughlin for the 41st time on his 80th birthday. He said he is 85 and "going strong".



*So many choices - so
hard to decide.*

*Ron Naumann
in the Harry and David
Dessert Room, 2017*

*Honoring the Past
Creating the Future*



Dear Fellow U Club Members,

While somewhat surprised, I was very pleased by the vote taken at our November 10 Member meeting. Indeed, once I digested the outcome I was overcome with excitement for the Club's future. I began to let my mind wander as to what the University Club at the Elks Building would look like and the services it would offer. In my mind, I envision a Club full of life and with a waiting list!

With that goal in mind, my fellow Board Members and I have begun executing the plan to sell the Club building and relocate to the Elks Building - and we're making excellent progress towards the goal.

Here's a brief list of things accomplished to date:

- Met with the Holly Theater representatives to discuss the sale of our building.
- Interviewed several younger peers and business professionals occupying spaces near the Elks Building to identify the services and events which would entice membership in the Club. We've also completed walk-throughs with some of those individuals.
- Met with the owner of the Elks Building to discuss the purchase of our building and the Club's floor plan at the Elks Building. At the Elks:
 - ◊ The Club will occupy 2,500 square feet spread across the Library, Main Club Room (the building's original billiard room), and the Barrel Room (a pretty cool, private meeting room space).
 - ◊ With the other main floor tenant (a restaurant), we'll have shared access to the outside terrace.
 - ◊ The Club will have a private entrance and 20 on-premise parking spaces.
 - ◊ The owners of the building have agreed to hold off on leasing the Annex at this time so the Club can explore its potential uses (which could include a conference room for rent

[continued on page 5]

Gene Abell originally joined the Club Board assuming his wife, Sandy's, board seat. Recently, Gene suggested he be replaced on the Board by a younger Member the better to steer the Club into the future. Having taken his suggestion, the Board has appointed Eric McLaughlin to fill the seat vacated by Gene. We thank Gene for his ongoing loyalty and service to the Club and welcome Eric to the Board!



The Annex

by members like the upstairs of the current Club House). Post Covid, the Annex could serve larger rental events. However, its 1,200 square feet will not be included in the Club's lease (although the space will be available to the Club on an as-needed rental basis).

◇ The Elks Building owners have reaffirmed their interest in purchasing our building, They are open to the "lease credit" approach which I described in my November 10 presentation to Members, to a cash purchase or any other creative solutions that best suit the Club.

The owners anticipate it will take 6 months from the date the Club issues a Letter of Intent to lease to build out our spaces. While they will be paying for those tenant improvements we need to design the interior we desire.

Club treasurer Rick Holcomb and I are working together to forecast cash flow and cash balances based on the proposed terms of the lease.

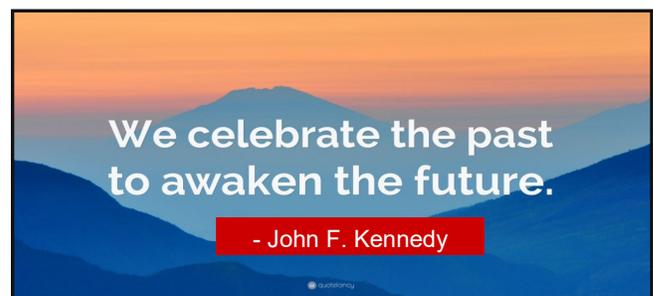
We have accomplished so much in such a short period of time, but there is still much to do.

The move to the Elks, another National Register of Historic Places building just like our Club building, is an opportunity to reimagine what the Club can become. However, it's very important to me that we continue to honor and preserve the Club's heritage in this transition. In that light, I'd like to ask for your input on what you would like the Club to look like in this new space and the services you would desire. Please contact me directly at Jason.L.Reno@gmail.com to share your thoughts or speak with any of the Club board members to offer your input.

Cheers to the Club's future success! This opportunity is truly exciting!

Jason Reno

Board Member & Chair, Relocation Committee





"Let us remember that the University Club has been here since 1910. The culture of the Club may need to change with the times but the tradition and fellowship needs to carry on for future generations."

— President Jack Salter
August 2002

Many Members have previously provided for the Club's future in their estate plans and their generosity has helped create the Club experience you enjoy.

Please consider helping to strengthen the Club's future by securing a bequest invitation form from [Jerry Jacobson](#) at 541-773-2727. **Your bequest can be made to either the Club or the RRVUC Foundation's Scholarship Funds or its Historic Building Preservation Fund.**



**Do You Know Someone Who Would Like to
Join the Club?**

A Personal Membership Application can be
downloaded at:

[Personal Member Application](#)

Rogue River Valley University Club

218 West Sixth Street
Medford, OR 97501

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and products

**Rogue River Valley
University Club**
218 West Sixth Street
Medford, OR 97501

(541) 772-4707

admin@medforduclub.org

Visit us on the web at
www.rrvuclub.org