Newsletter

American Sternwheel Association

P.O. Box 1482, Charleston, WV 25325 ~ americansternwheel.org

November 2026 – Volume 50 – Issue No. 6

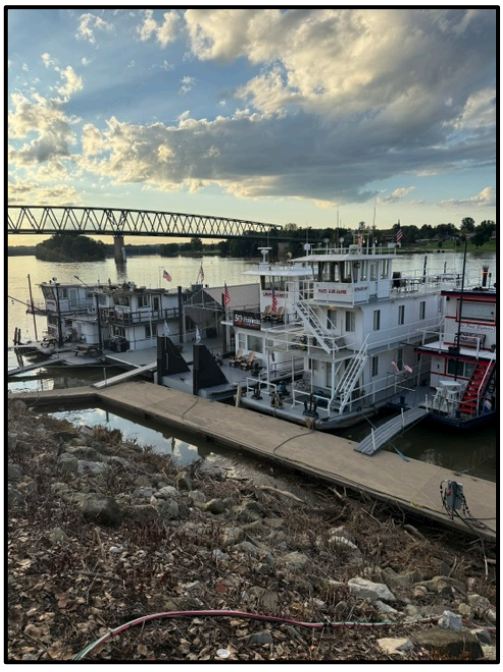
The Ohio River Sternwheel Festival

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY! That was the mantra for the 50th Annual Ohio River Sternwheel Festival as boats and their crews dealt with rain and rising water in Marietta. Sternwheelers that arrived early were hit with high water on Saturday, September 5th, that rose to 19.2'. For reference, 18' puts water over the walkway!



Then, even though the mighty Ohio River began to recede over the next few days, by September 10th, Mother Nature gave the city and surrounding areas another dose of rain, making the water rise once more to 18.8'.

This photo at left shows the walkway under water leaving boaters stranded aboard their vessels. Their gangways actually stuck out like diving boards, not able to reach the pavement. The photo below shows the normal conditions our sternwheelers are accustomed to, and there certainly is quite a difference!



The Captain's Dinner, held Thursday evening, still had lots of attendees despite the wet environment, and guests would say it was well worth the trip (either hopping boat to boat or wading through the flooded terrain), so THANK YOU to the Levee House Bistro for hosting! Everyone had a delicious meal!

Also, it was great to see all of our captains and crews remaining positive throughout their stay in Marietta under such unpredictable conditions. It's such a blessing how all of our boaters always help each other and treat one another as family.



Be sure to see Pages 4, 5, and 6, where we continue with photos and details of the events at the Ohio River Sternwheel Festival.

ASA Officers

Capt. Bryan Hughes
President

Capt. Butch Leport
1st Vice President

Capt. C.R. Neale III
2nd Vice President

Capt. Tom Cook
Treasurer
Budget & Finance
Membership

Debbie Lucik
Secretary

Stephanie Burden
Ways & Means

Capt. Jim Kranz
Webmaster

Capt. Rick Burden
Steering

Kristina Price
Editor

Don't Forget to Mark Your Calendar!



Nov. 14, 2026
ASA Meeting at Lafayette Hotel
Marietta, OH (Ohio River, MM 172)

Trustee Meeting @ 2 pm
General Meeting @ 3 pm
"80's Theme" CHRISTMAS PARTY @ 5:30 pm

Be sure to come celebrate with us! Prepay $25 per person. Guys bring a guy gift and girls bring a girl gift for a fun exchange! HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

AS ALWAYS … If you are having a river event and would like to be included in our calendar, please notify the Editor at editor@americansternwheel.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE – *Omission from September's Issue:* We would like to apologize that the story on Page 6 was missing its title and author. The title was "The JENNY B's Charleston Trip 2026" and the author was Stephanie Burden. We are truly sorry for the error, and thanks again to Stephanie for contributing.

CONSIDER THIS: *"A man without a goal is like a ship without a rudder." ~ Thomas Carlyle*

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new ASA Member!

Lisa Ladu *of Marietta, OH*



Always in the spirit of fun among our captains, the crew of the DIANA JEAN, owned by Doug & Mary Ellen Lowe, had a special surprise for Captain Lou Wendell of the RUFUS B II in the way of Hawaiian shirts featuring dear Lou's picture!

Captain Lou, known for his Regatta Rat shirts each year, must have been amazed to see *these* shirts surface! And boy oh boy were those shirts popular, as they created quite the bidding war when they were auctioned off at our ASA Meeting!

More from July's Charleston Sternwheel Regatta

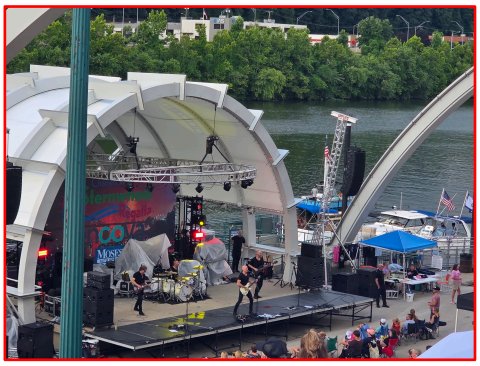
On the cover of our last newsletter, we highlighted the Independence Day concert featuring Bret Michaels and Lita Ford, but now we'd like to recap all of the other amazing acts that lit up Charleston's stage. Kicking off the regatta that Thursday night, two female powerhouses took to the stage – bluesy rocker Melissa Etheridge and award-winning country vocalist Wynonna Judd. Offering a taste of R&B flavor on Friday night, crooners Montell Jordan, Bow Wow, and Bobby Brown had the entire audience moving and grooving with rap and hip-hop soul. To catch a great clip of Bobby Brown performing his 1992 Billboard Music smash hit, "Good Enough", simply visit the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta Facebook page, where in spite of the heat that night, everyone was dancing, singing and reminiscing. Then, regardless of some rain on Sunday night, alternative rock band Tonic delivered a rousing performance of electric guitar riffs and gritty vocals.



(The photo above shows festival attendees, Josh McGrath & Larry Moon, backstage with Wynona Judd. Photo courtesy of Josh McGrath.)



(This photo of musical acts Bobby Brown, Bow Wow & Montell Jordan is courtesy of the Kanawha County Facebook page.)

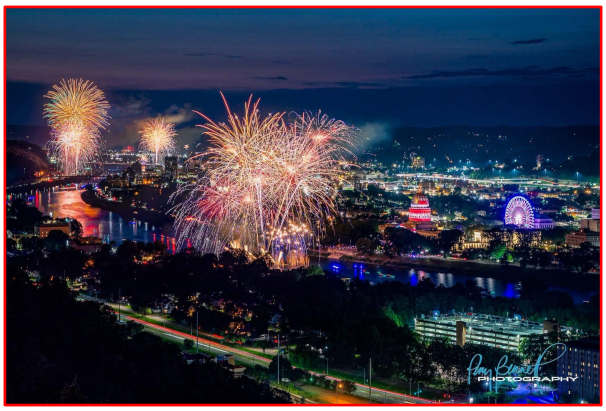


(Photo above is of the band TONIC courtesy of the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta Facebook page.)

In the photo below, we have the dedicated people behind the scenes who make the regatta happen, including our own Captain Bryan Hughes with pup, Bosun, and Joshua Scott (at far right), and Charleston's Mayor, Amy Schuler Goodwin (in red blazer) with additional committee members.

(Photo courtesy of Mayor Amy Schuler Goodwin.)





Look at this phenomenal photo of Charleston's massive fireworks display captured by Perry Bennett Photography! Soooo AH-MAZ-ING!!!!



Here we have our favorite parade couple fashionable as always, Captain Jim & Jean Kranz of the DONNA RAE.



At left we have the PRINCESS MARGY from Dunbar, WV, and we're happy to announce she ran her first sternwheel race this year in Charleston!

At right we have the lineup for the race heats in Charleston.

(Both photos are courtesy of Stephanie Burden.)



The Ohio River Sternwheel Festival …

As these photos show, there were numerous difficulties captains faced as on-and-off flooding ignited worry. A real fear was that sternwheelers would get hung up as the Ohio River receded. In the photo at left, Captain Dana DeMent and Captain Butch Leport placed wood timbers in front of the bow of the NATALIE JANE to avoid floating overtop of the submerged walkway. A sternwheeler that was not so lucky, was the MORNING GLORY, shown in the middle photo, who floated above shore and was later rescued by one of Neale Marine Transportation's towboats, the CAPT. C.R. NEALE III. The photo at right shows the City of Marietta's workforce creeping along the heavily submerged walkway installing poles to mark each side of the pavement for reference points.





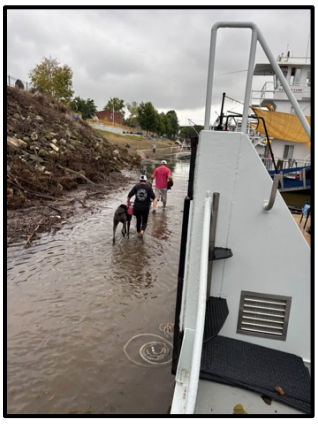


Though such a pretty photo at right, this shot taken at 4 a.m. on Sept. 5th by Captain Steve Price, again emphasizes the severity of flooding, as well as drift, that boaters faced.



And when it came to drift, the river sent lots of tree trunks, branches, trash, and detritus downriver that kept boats busy washing their wheels to prevent debris from causing potential damage. The photo at right, taken by Captain Jim Kranz, gives a glimpse of drift accumulation in front of the JOE S.





In the photo at left, Captain Kris Eads and Tabby Stutler of the MISS STERLING walk their Great Danes, Emi and Jax, through the floodwater to get to shore. Thank goodness for those long legs! Other pups, however, had to be carried by their owners as they weren't too keen on touching the water and/or had much shorter legs. (In their defense, some humans weren't enthused to be in that murky Ohio River either!)



Continued from our Cover Story

The river receded once more by Friday, September 11th, and the festival began with a patriotic and heartfelt 9/11 tribute marking the 25th anniversary of the day our world was forever changed. Various speakers, including Marietta Mayor, Josh Schlicker, and David Brown of Disabled American Veterans Chapter 52, delivered words of remembrance, as area Boy Scouts placed wreaths to represent the various entities that lost their lives. There was also an emergency vehicle procession and first responders march, a helicopter flying overhead, and most importantly, moments of silence observed as a bell rang out during the times of attack and destruction.

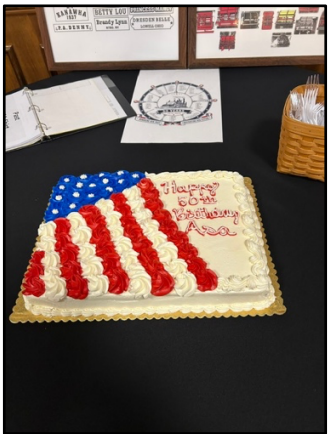
(Photos below provided by the Marietta Ohio Facebook Page.)



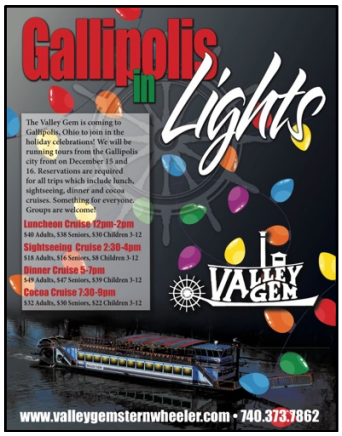




Moving on to Saturday's ASA Meeting, we celebrated the organization's 50th Birthday with a cake and a display of ASA memorabilia. There was discussion of the City of Gallipolis incorporating our sternwheelers in their annual "Gallipolis In Lights" holiday display from November 25th to January 1st. Our boats are already involved in lighted holiday parades in both St. Albans, WV, and Charleston, WV, so Gallipolis hopes to do something similar. Also, it was just announced that the Valley Gem will be offering cruises in Gallipolis during the event on December 15th & 16th. And as seen below, a great moment of the meeting was Captain Jack Bedeck of the E.L. THUMPER showing off his abs!











The ASA Merchandise Tent did well on Saturday until strong winds and the threat of heavy rain forced us to pack up early.

But even though some light drizzle *did* turn into rain later that afternoon, the weather was NOT going to put the kibosh on that night's highly anticipated Fireworks Super Show complete with aircraft and drones!



Thank you to Wunderlich Photography for capturing this breathtaking shot of those amazing drones and our majestic boats!

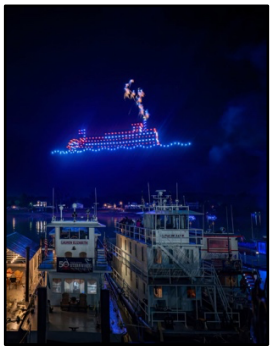
More Highlights from the Ohio River Sternwheel Festival



The oohs and ahhs were plentiful as drones and fireworks lit up the Marietta sky and reflected off the water on Saturday, Sept. 12th. These stunning photos are a testament to the phenomenal display.

At left, Jen Marie Photography captured a fizzing cascade of light falling from the bridge as pops of color rose above. In the black and white photo below right, Bruce Wunderlich of Wunderlich Photography caught a burst of trailing sparks both forefront and in the rear of his shot. And below center and left, Jen Marie Photography not only secured dazzling colors that scattered and whirled, but she also nabbed the flight of synchronized drones that filled the sky with phrases and 3D images.





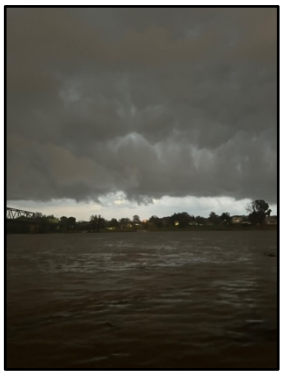


Throughout the festival there were also food and merchandise vendors aplenty, family activities, pageants, and loads of daily musical entertainment. In total, 26 sternwheelers made the trip to Marietta:

DIANA JEAN	JENNY B	MISS STERLING	RUFUS B II
DONNA RAE	JOE S	MORNING GLORY CHAPEL	SEWICKLEY
E.L. THUMPER	KANAWHA	NANNIE JEAN	SUNSHINE
FARIS WHEEL	KATIE H	NATALIE JANE	TRAVIS LEE
HENNY COOK	LADY CARMINA	NEMACOLIN	WILLIAM D
HOBBY III	LAUREN ELIZABETH	PEARL ANNE	
JACK B	LE'PORT EXPLORER	ROY C	



On Sunday afternoon, the festival crowd delighted in watching the sternwheel races, and then boats headed south. The photo at left, taken by Tabby Stutler of the MISS STERLING, gives a glimpse of the LAUREN ELIZABETH in the race under beautiful blue skies and puffy clouds. However, as the ORSF's River Rats dismantled the entertainment barge early that evening, a storm was on the horizon. As the last truckload of equipment left, violent winds howled, the sky turned an ominous black, and the rain descended. Kristina Price captured the photos below mere seconds before the storm hit, which caused a loss of electricity up and down the main street of Marietta. Seeing the Lafayette Hotel in complete darkness was pretty eerie to say the least. The LAUREN ELIZABETH was the only sternwheeler that remained overnight, as they were setting out on Monday morning northbound for their home dock in East Liverpool. The remnants of the previous night's storm had the river back up to 19.9' (once again over the 18' that puts water over the walkway), and one can only assume that Mother Nature had been on an emotional roller coaster for those past few weeks as she fluctuated between doom and gloom, rain and storms, and then rays of sunshine and calm skies!





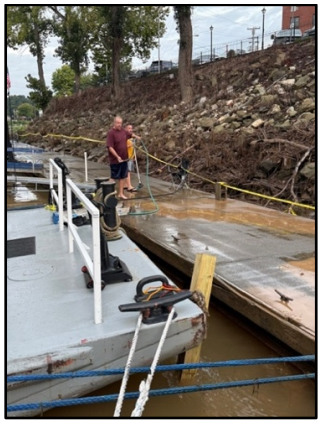
Stephanie's Ways & Means



• **ASA Merchandise:** We have our usual assortment of merchandise for sale consisting of shirts, hats, hoodies, etc., as well as our new large umbrellas for $38 each (shown at left).
Contact Stephanie at brightideaacres@gmail.com to purchase.

• **ASA Tent Volunteers:** Thank you to everyone who volunteered during the Ohio River Sternwheel Festival. As always, we appreciate your time and dedication!

• **2026 Christmas Party:** Our Christmas Party is on the horizon and is $25 per person (prepay). Hope to see everyone on November 14th in your best 80's fashion!

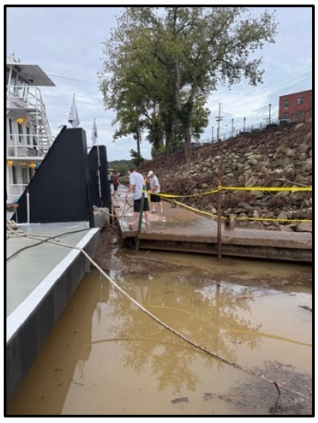


POST-FLOOD CLEAN UP IN MARIETTA

We just wanted to give a huge shoutout to the dedicated men who cleaned the walkway after the water receded in Marietta. We thank you and appreciate you!
You guys get an ATTA BOY!



(Thank you to Captain Steve Price for the photos of their hard work!)



We're So Sorry, Pomeroy!

As sternwheelers traveled south following the races in Marietta on Sunday, Sept. 13th, headed to the Pomeroy Sternwheel Regatta, the weather seemed to improve. Early arrivals to Pomeroy were able to easily dock at the levy as shown in the photo at right.

However, Mother Nature would again thwart plans as seen in the photo below left, with high water – close to 26' in fact, forcing sternwheel captains to leave for the safety of their crews and vessels. Our sternwheel boats had high hopes to return for the regatta, but only the WILLIAM D made it back. We all hope to see you under much better conditions next year!



Photo courtesy of Kash Sternwheeler on FB.



Photo Courtesy of the Pomeroy Sternwheel Regatta page on FB.



Photo courtesy of William Erb on FB, with a great story included.

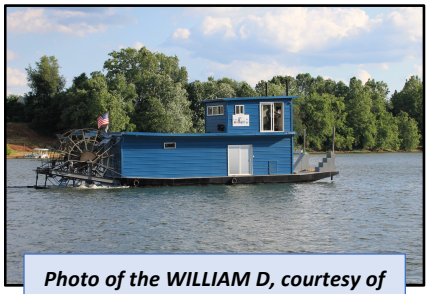


Photo of the WILLIAM D, courtesy of the ASA website. This sternwheeler was constructed by Captain David Lehew, and is owned by he and his father, Captain John Lehew. Her homeport is in Syracuse, Ohio.

Meeting Minutes for the American Sternwheel Association

GENERAL MEETING

Date: July 4, 2026
Location: Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, Charleston, WV

General Membership Meeting Called to Order: Captain Bryan Hughes, President, at 10:45 AM

Minutes
Motion made and accepted to defer the reading of the minutes. Personal copies are available.

Treasurer's Report
Captain Tom Cook submitted the Treasurer's Report. Motion made and accepted.

Committee Reports

***Budget & Finance:** Captain Tom Cook reviewed the Budget & Finance Report.
***Membership:** Captain Tom Cook reported there are currently 270 members in 20 states.
***Steering Committee:** Captain Rick Burden reported no complaints.
***Magazine & Newsletter:** Editor, Kristina Price, could not attend the meeting, but Captain Bryan Hughes reminded members that new stories and features continue to be needed.
***Website Report:** Captain Jim Kranz reported that the ALEXANDRIA M has sold and the new owners restored the boat to the original name SUNSHINE. The Directory has been updated and is available online to download and/or print.
***Ways & Means:** Stephanie Burden announced this year's Christmas Party will have an 80's theme. Volunteers are needed to work the ASA Merchandise Tent in Marietta. See Stephanie to sign up for a time slot that works for you. There are new ASA vests and raincoats available, however these are special order, so again, see Stephanie if you are interested. The Festival Committee in Marietta is planning for a meet-and-greet with the "Adopt a Boat" businesses on Monday, September 7th. Details coming.

Old Business
None.

New Business
Captain Josh Lester reminded everyone that we have a concierge this year to assist the boats. Sammy is doing a great job and several people commented on how helpful he has been and what a nice person he is. Captain Josh said he would have a "Thank You" card for everyone to sign at the captain's meeting on Sunday morning, pre-race.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:19 AM, motion not needed.



A FAMILY LEGACY

This group photo was taken at the ASA Meeting featuring three generations of the Heckert family. Their matching shirts display "Anchored in Faith" on the front, and "A Family Legacy" on the back with some of the family's sternwheel boats – past and present – the DIXIE, P.A. DENNY, SHEILA D, and LEVIATHAN.

Left to Right are: Madison Binkney (Granddaughter), Diane Heckert (Mother), April Binkney (Daughter), Melissa Albertsen (Daughter), and Regina Fleming (Sister).