changes dramatically from incandescent to outdoor light anyway. I’ve tried to capture the sense of the boat emerging from a morning ground fog into sunlight... and yes, I’ve transposed it to the Upper Mississippi so I could include a bluff or two.”

We most certainly have found good use for Dutton’s painting, and thank him for his kindness in sharing it with us. We assume Dick Rutter will be pleased as punch at this work of art (see Dick’s article on page 27.)

Bill Reynolds writes: “Cold weather has seemed to slow progress on the shantyboat. At this time she sits on her new foundation anchored against - God forbid - any high water. We have a new roof on her and have rebuilt all the window sashes. Fair weather should bring on the reinstallation of the floor and the stern bulkhead as well as finishing the interior. Lots to do yet, but she is being saved by board on board. I am also working on an interpretive plan to be used by the guides at the River Museum and Jeff and I are working on a furnishing plan. We were just given a brand new 1900’s Sears wood stove by one of the contributors to the shantyboat restoration - George Hausser. It has more chrome than a 1950 Buick and will look great.

The images are from the move just before S&D, but I thought some of the folks who weren’t here might enjoy them. It’s not every day you see a shantyboat going down the road. The last picture is of Barb and Bea Ritts in front of the New Year’s card taken of them as children and now part of the Ritts collection in the hands of S&D.

I read the latest REFLECTOR from cover to cover and thought it quite fitting to do so near a body of water.

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every angle — which can’t be said for the vast majority of boats built.

Grandad Way and I liked a fair, natural, true, and well-turned line. A line which was incorporated for a valid technical reason, but which also had a “fillip” or artistry in its execution. That line could be found in a Bell Yawl, a tug, a keel, or other lowly thing, as well as in a creation as majestic as the J. M. WHITE. There’s sometimes remarkable beauty wrought into the most pedestrian of things. Regarding the BETSY ANN drawing, I took as high compliment indeed remarks from my mom and Uncle Fred Way:

Mom: “I like that you made her all dirty and gray. The boats really did look like that. They worked hard for a living, and went to smoky, dirty cities, which is why they never stayed fresh looking for very long.”

Uncle Fred Way: “I like the green water. It really does look that way on the Upper Ohio. Very few people have been able to accurately capture that color.”

Photo of AMERICA on page 27 and drawing of BETSY ANN below courtesy of Dick Rutter.

Nori Muster

What’s Online at Steamboats.com

I started Steamboats.com in 1998, when the Internet was new to most of us, and when the best domain names were still available. Discovering that the URL Steamboats.com was not taken, my first thought was to notify the Delta Queen Steamboat Co., thinking they might want to use it. However, they already had a website at Deltaqueen.com, so I took Steamboats.com. At the time, everything I knew about steamboat history, I learned on the DELTA QUEEN.

My father worked for the DELTA QUEEN from 1966-1976. His job was to manage the company and protect the boat from unreasonable federal safety at sea laws. The DELTA QUEEN never went to sea, remaining always close to shore on the rivers. My father and Greene Line Steamers Vice President Betty Blake fought a courageous battle to save the boat in 1970, against an aggressive Congressman Garmatz who tried to block the boat’s exemption. Americans joined together that year to save the
boat and she continued in the cruise business for an additional thirty-eight years until 2008. Although currently serving as a hotel in Chattanooga, the DELTA QUEEN is in good mechanical condition, fit to travel again one day.

Before my father died in 1989, we compiled his Save the DELTA QUEEN papers for the Cincinnati Historical Society. Besides about thirty boxes of documentation, his collection included oil paintings, model boats, ship bells, and steam whistles. When the time came, Cincinnati Historical sent a full-size moving van to Los Angeles to pick everything up. The first thing I posted on Steamboats.com was the index to my father’s collection, along with select documents. Now, through a grant from the Bill Muster Foundation, the Cincinnati Historical Society is scanning my father’s photographs to put online.

As soon as I posted my site, I started to receive requests for steamboat information. Almost everybody who contacted me had a steamboat ancestor, and wanted me to provide information about their ancestors’ boat(s). Armed with a copy of Capt. Fred Way’s directory, I could answer a few questions, but usually all I could do was thank people for their letters, apologize for not knowing much outside of DELTA QUEEN history, and offer to post their questions at the site. Thus, the site has a blog archive that dates back to 1998. In the 2000’s, my primitive guestbook was inundated by robo spam, and thus I had to find more sophisticated software. What I use now is still fairly rudimentary, but I build the whole site by hand, using BBEdit coding software, Photoshop, and a MacBook laptop computer. Since I do not plan to learn more complicated computer languages at this time, my motto at the site is keep it simple.

When Steamboats.com started, not many steamboat hobbyists were on the Internet, but I received emails and guestbook postings from those who were: Keith Norrington, Jerry Canavit, John Weise, and Travis Vasconcelos. I have corresponded with many former DELTA QUEEN employees and people who remember my father. I met Craig Stichtenoth, son of the late Cincinnati artist Warren Stichtenoth, who designed DELTA QUEEN logos and artwork for many years. Craig gave me permission to use one of his father’s logos as the Steamboats.com logo. I also heard from Ella Engelkes, the great-granddaughter of the great Capt. Fred Way, and Shelby Louden, son of the late DELTA QUEEN pilot Capt. Harry Louden.

I have also met artists, musicians, and people who asked for links to their creative projects. For example, in 2002 John Fryant, the renowned model builder, contacted me to advertise his model boat builder plans. I also post ads for steamboat calendars every holiday season. Most recently I have connected with the steamboat community through Facebook.com, including people I met as a child on the DELTA QUEEN like Gordon Greene and Captain Gabe Chengery. To me, the Internet is an ongoing DELTA QUEEN reunion.

Since 1998, Steamboats.com has grown to include thousands of steamboat photos. Dozens of collectors have donated jspecs for the site, but Dave Thomson of Sun Valley, CA, has donated the most. He has a vast collection of posters, illustrations, movie stills, postcards, black and white photos, and way bills. He also collects artifacts, such as models, and pieces of old pilot houses.

I still add an average of about fifteen items a month from Dave Thomson and other visitors to the site. One of the latest issues I have covered is the reappearance of the calliope mermaids from the MISSISSIPPI QUEEN. Artisan George Burch bought the mermaids from a Louisiana oil man who found them after the boat was dismantled. Now the mermaids will stand on a hilltop overlooking the Ohio River at Mile 600.5. George Burch went on Facebook and posted multiple photos of the mermaids as the restoration was in process, then gave permission to post his photos at Steamboats.com.

The site has three main sections. The museum wing is the largest, with DELTA QUEEN materials, the Dave Thomson Collection, and about fifty other exhibits. The research library offers resources for people to trace their steamboat ancestry; and the hobby center is a place for model boat builders, as well as other fun steamboat hobbies. One of the hobbies Steamboats.com promotes is online steamboat racing. My site has staged an online
race every year since 2001. Yes, a roll of the dice determines the winner, but it is great fun.

The main competition is between Steamboats.org and Steamboats.com. I met the people behind Steamboats.org, Franz Neumeier and Carmen Winkler, back in 1998. As soon as my site was up and running, I wrote to them through their site to introduce myself as a virtual neighbor. Over the years, we have stayed in contact, and I even met Carmen and had a great tour of Munich on a trip to Germany in 2010. Their daughter Leonie enjoys the competition of the online steamboat races.

One of the attractions that gets the most traffic is the Steamboats of the Fifty States page. It is my attempt to list every existing paddle wheel boat, Twain-like boat, or paddlewheel maritime museum in America. I made the page so people could find the boats closest to them, or plan road trips to hunt for boats. I have approximately 160 listings. Some boats operate tours, while others are private or closed down. I have everything from historic steam-powered vessels in museum centers, to boats that are only for show. For example, I include the Disney Frontierland boats, which are replicas of long departed historic vessels.

I receive letters from travelers who tell me about vacations they have taken to look for paddle wheelers, even sending me the names of additional boats that they found. I also hear from libraries, universities, reporters, alumni groups, children’s camps and others who want to use photos or logos from my site. My policy is that most things can be used with a link or credit. A couple times, Dave Thomson and I have apprehended pirates selling his images on eBay or otherwise using them without permission. We have resolved these situations as they come up with a simple courtesy phone call to the pirate.

Steamboats.com is a journal of my travels in the Internet steamboat world. Meeting people who play a role in steamboat history and in the preservation of that history has been my greatest reward for building the site. In my lifetime, mostly thanks to my father, I have traveled on the DELTA QUEEN seven times (1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1992, 1996, and 2007). In 2007, I won a bottle of champagne — not for my number of cruises, because others had taken many more cruises than me, but for having taken the earliest first cruise.

The year 1967 is a long time ago, and although only eleven at the time, I still remember the first time I saw the boat. Our family flew into St. Louis and Betty Blake met our plane. We all piled into the Greene Line Steamers company station wagon, and she dropped us off at a museum to wait. After looking at all the exhibits, our mother took my little brother and me to an outside terrace to see the river views. Far off in the distance, beyond the Gateway Arch, we heard the DELTA QUEEN coming up the river. First we saw the boat, then the steam from the whistle, and then moments later, we heard the sound of the whistle. It was the difference between the speed of light and the speed of sound, just as with lightning and thunder. As the boat slowly approached, I realized she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life. My original vision of the DELTA QUEEN remains with me after all these years. I continue to have faith that she will get the exemption and run on the rivers again. (∎)

Dave Thomson

I was very pleased and proud that my photo of the GOLD SHIELD appeared on the cover of the December 2012 edition of the REFLECTOR. It’s nice to get encouragement for my mania which baffles some family members who just sniff impatiently when I show some recent acquisition, whether it’s an old photograph, an original lithograph or a painting.

The vintage photo attached to this article was received in November 2012, and it pictures the last KATE ADAMS in the fall of 1926. She bears her own name and the fictional name LA BELLE RIVIERE that she was given from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin when it was filmed on the Ouachita and Black rivers.

The KATE ADAMS may have provided quarters and dining facilities for the movie crew. The tents on the barge lashed to the port side could have been where make-up was applied to the actors and “extras” and where the wardrobe department