

CAPTAIN FREDERICK WAY, JR.

It is with sincere regret that we record the passing, at Marietta, Ohio, on October 3rd, 1992, of Captain Frederick Way, Jr., in his 92nd year.

Fred Way was dedicated to preserving the history of America's Inland Rivers and the boats that ran on them. He was born February 17, 1901, at Sewickley, Pennsylvania, a town a bit downstream from Pittsburgh that was best known for being the site of "Wilpen", home of the family of William Penn Snyder, of steelmaking fame. Capt. Way lived in Sewickley for most of his life, and his father ran a sand and gravel business there.

At an early age, Fred decided that the river was his life, and he eventually became a renowned pilot of packets and towboats. In 1925, his father purchased the Upper Ohio passenger packet BETSY ANN for Fred, and together they operated her into the 1930s, when the Great Depression put an end to the venture. Capt. Way subsequently stood pilot watches on the SENATOR CORDILL, the LIBERTY, various Streckfus excursion steamers, and Ashland Oil towboats. His pilot's license covered all of the Allegheny River, much of the Monongahela, parts of the Kanawha and Kentucky Rivers, and the Ohio River from its origin at Pittsburgh down to Louisville.

Fred Way was, perhaps, best known as a writer and historian, but his true memorial will remain the steamer DELTA QUEEN. When Capt. Tom Greene, of Cincinnati, acquired DELTA QUEEN in California late in 1946, it was Fred Way who went to San Francisco and figured out how to box in her superstructure and tow her around to New Orleans via the Panama Canal. She then was "uncrated", and with Fred as master, she sailed under her own power up to the Dravo shipyard at Pittsburgh, where she was rebuilt for Greene Line passenger service on the Mississippi and its tributaries. Subsequently, Fred occasionally piloted DELTA QUEEN, most notably on her delivery voyage from Pittsburgh down to her new home port, Cincinnati.

He was author of numerous books, including The Log of the BETSY ANN, The Saga of the DELTA QUEEN, She Takes the Horns, Pilotin' Comes Natural, The Allegheny, and the monumental compendia Way's Packet Directory 1848-1983 and Way's Steam Towboat Directory. From 1945 until 1976, he published his annual "Inland River Record", a register of commercial river vessels.

Fred Way was one of the founders of Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen, the premier marine historical society of the rivers. He became its first president in 1941 and served in that capacity continuously until his death. He edited the society's quarterly publication "S & D Reflector" from its first issue in 1964 through the September, 1992, issue. (Your Editor has long considered "S & D Reflector" to be the finest marine historical publication produced anywhere in the Americas, bar none!)

After cremation, Capt. Way's remains were placed aboard DELTA QUEEN, under the care of her longtime master, Capt. Gabriel Chengery, on October 8th at Marietta and, late the following evening, were delivered at Sewickley for burial. Despite the late hour of the unscheduled stop, most of Sewickley turned up at the landing to welcome Fred home, and there was suitable ceremony as his ashes left the boat and DELTA QUEEN departed.

A memorial service was held at the Hotel Lafayette at Marietta on October 27, while DELTA QUEEN was in port en route from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. As well, the October 18th race between DELTA QUEEN and BELLE OF LOUISVILLE at Cincinnati's "Tall Stacks" festival was dedicated to the memory of Fred Way, and both boats flew their flags at half staff.

Capt. Way was predeceased by his first and second wives and by a brother. He is survived by two sons, a daughter ("Bee" Rutter, S & D Treasurer), and by nine grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. We will miss reading his words each quarter in "Reflector", as he truly had earned his reputation as one of North America's most respected marine historians.