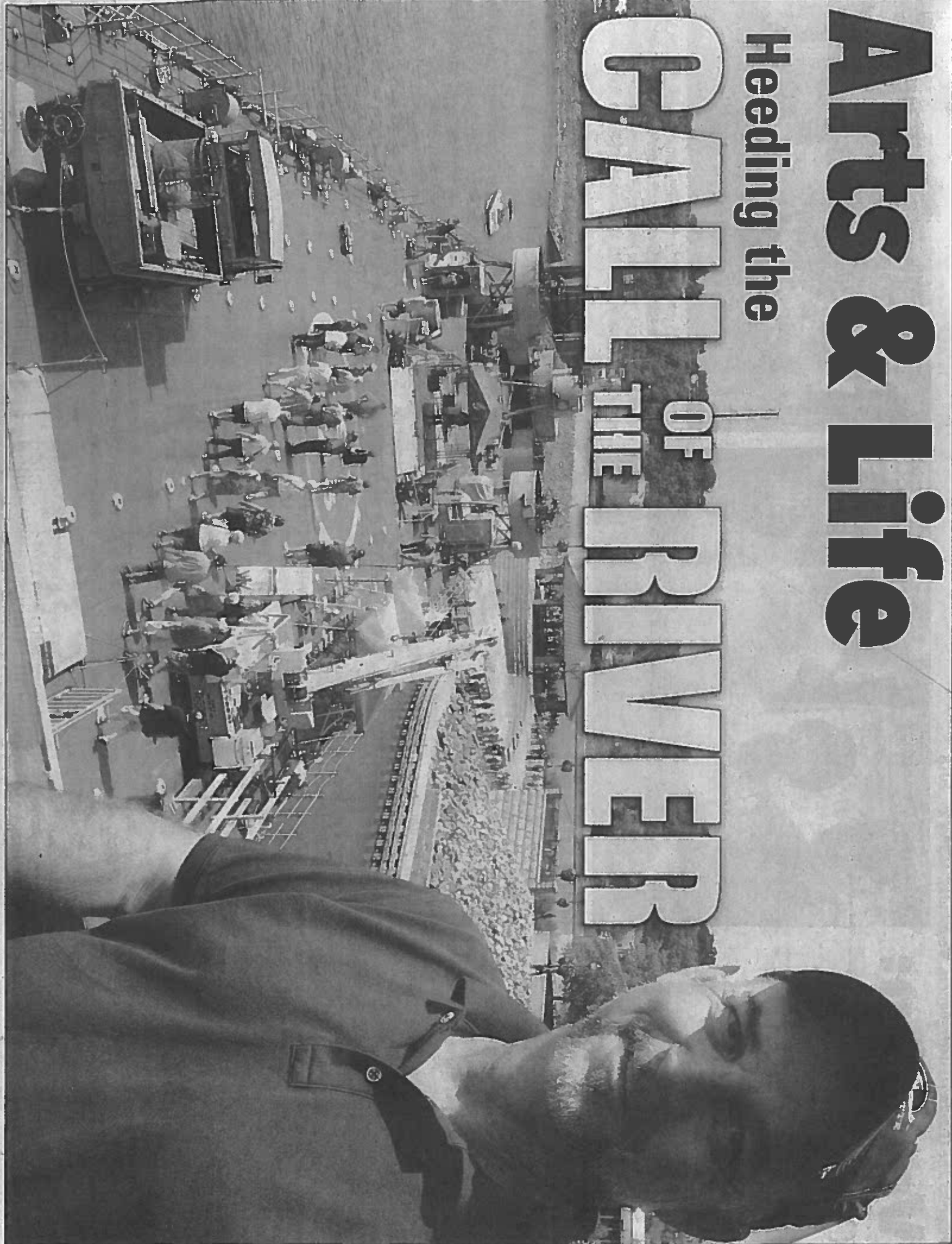


Arts & Life

Heeding the

CALL OF THE RIVER



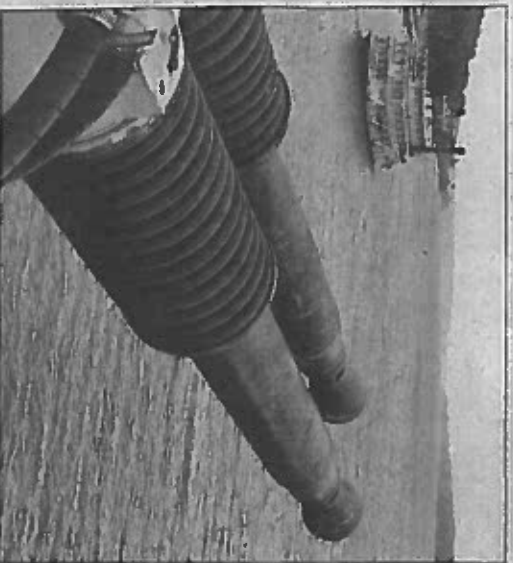
High up on the LST 325 riverboat pilot John Vaughn shares his experience bringing this World War II ship down the Ohio River from Evansville, Ind., and then up the Mississippi River to Dubuque, Iowa. Vaughn volunteered his services for the trip and said it was "a bucket list item that he never knew he wanted."

Vaughn pilots military vessel LST 325 for six days

John Vaughn loves being a riverboat pilot. It's all that he's wanted to do since he was a kid. He says piloting a riverboat is like playing with a big toy. This past week he played with a big toy, a really big toy—328 feet long. And, this toy had guns although they were not combat ready.



When John Vaughn piloted the LST 325, he called down to the wheelhouse (above) when he wanted to speed up, slow down or turn the ship. Right: Kevin Sifer guides the riverboat through past LST 325 near Le Claire, Iowa.



by P. Carter Newton
cnewton@
galgazette.com

Vaughn just spent six days as a volunteer pilot, guiding LST 325 along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers from its home base in Evansville, Ind., to Dubuque, Iowa, where the boat was docked and available for tours last week. He's thrilled to have had the experience and, yet, is a bit bummed out, because he won't be able to guide LST 325 and its 50-plus crew back to Evansville. He must return to his real job as a pilot on the Marquette Transportation Co.'s Theresa L. Wood pushing barges on the lower Mississippi River.

Without volunteers who possess the skill sets and licensing which Vaughn has, LST 325 wouldn't be able to make yearly trips along the nation's rivers. Capt. Bob Kubota, one of the volunteers serving on the ship, says finding volunteer pilots is sometimes difficult and is more difficult now thanks to Coast Guard regulations. As Vaughn boards the ship, the volunteers, all wearing red shirts with "LST 325 crew" emblazoned on the front, come up to greet him like a long lost friend.

Vaughn talks about the great respect he has for this crew. They've all applied for this opportunity to serve on LST 325 and each has completed at least 80 hours of volunteer labor to keep the boat properly maintained. Each person on board has the skill sets needed for the trip.

At port in Dubuque, each member has a different job, whether it is selling tickets, guiding patrons, soliciting donations, selling souvenirs or any other task in need of fulfillment.

Vaughn hasn't served in the military, but he's learned about these folks and their service and bonded with them. "I am in awe of them and humbled beyond words," he says.



After passing through Lock and Dam 12 in Bellevue, Iowa, LST 325 cruises past Chestnut Mountain Resort on its way up to Dubuque, Iowa. *Mark Van Osdel photo*

One of his favorite crew members, Irwin T. Kuhns, walks by as Vaughn first boards the ship. Kuhns, 92 years of age, is carrying chairs to the little souvenir shop set up at the bow of the ship. Now a Westerville, Ohio, resident and retired for 30 years, he served on an LST during World War II and the Korean War.

Vaughn says his friend "thinks at stuff" about World War II, but doesn't go into detail.

"He told me about being on a Higgins boat (also known as an LCVP, Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) with so much anti-aircraft fire going on that it was raining shrapnel, as if it was hailing," the pilot noted.

At 53 years of age Vaughn was the third youngest person on the boat.

Several crew members laugh as they regale Vaughn with a story. . . how when they were in the Navy and their ship came into port, "fathers would be told to keep their daughters locked up. Now when we come to port the mothers and grandmothers need to be locked up."

Vaughn laughs and smiles as a crew member asks, "Can you put that story in the paper?"

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Vaughn: Chance of a lifetime on the Mississippi

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Yes!
Vaughn treats all onboard with respect and deference. He doesn't need to, but he asks permission before entering the boat, before entering the wheelhouse and the Con.

In reality, he has free range to go anywhere he wants.

In reality, he respects what these volunteers do as well as their service to the country.

And, when he's told to fire off a round or two from the gun in the bow of the boat, Vaughn is all smiles. He now gets to play with one of the big toys on this big boat.

Vaughn tells Kubota, "This (being a volunteer pilot) has been a bucket list thing that I never knew I wanted."

This isn't the first time Vaughn has served on the LST 325.

Two years ago he met up with the ship at Cape Girardeau, Mo., and helped pilot the LST to Vicksburg, Miss., site of a great victory for Gen. U.S. Grant and his Union Army.

Vaughn duncties about another northern Yankee bringing a U.S. Navy ship to Vicksburg.

Despite its size, Vaughn says piloting the LST wasn't an issue. Because the ship is designed to carry tanks, vehicles and troops and land ashore without a dock, its really like operating a barge.

It's really a river craft and easy to operate on a river, he says.

Operating in the ocean with swells is a different matter, he says. The boat could roll 20 degrees on either side.

"This was a seasick machine," he says while going past the bunkers Army personnel would have occupied before being transported into battle.

On the river, Vaughn continues, "LST 325 was awesome to pilot. In fact, it allowed me to be a pilot."

On the Theresa L. Wood, as he's pushing 25 barges down river, he has at his disposal electronic



charts and other instruments which gives him lots of information as he has direct control of the engine.

On the LST 325 he's up in the Con surrounded by glass. He's way up in the air with a commanding view of the boat's deck and a 360-degree view of the Mississippi River.

From here, though, he can't steer the boat or set its speed. He's more like a conductor.

He calls down to the wheelhouse with the proper directions. The terms are different on this Navy ship. "I have to step back and think what to do or say," he says.

To go one-third speed ahead, Vaughn gives directions to the wheelhouse. The directions are repeated in the wheelhouse and then repeated back to Vaughn.

This process is repeated every time Vaughn wants to speed up, slow down or turn to starboard (right) or port.

Where the current is stronger, LST 325 travels five miles per hour. Just north of St. Louis, the ship is going seven miles an hour. In still water, the LST can reach a speed of eight miles per hour.

LST 325 operates 24 hours a day on its trip upriver. Vaughn trades off every six hours with another pilot, on the six-day journey up to Dubuque, Ia. In Paducah, Ky., the boat takes on 14,000 gallons of fuel, enough to make the trip to Dubuque, back to Evansville and then to the fuel stop on next year's trip.

When the firestop, Wood needs fuel it takes on 30,000 gallons. It takes about two hours to do so.

As Vaughn stands next to the Con high above the ship's deck, he's thoughtful as he talks about his life on the river as well as his parents and Dennis



Left photo: LST 325 volunteer Robert D. Jorilli, from left, author of a book about the ship, chats with Galena Territory residents Joan and Denton Brown and their son Matt. Above: As he boards the ship, John Vaughn, center, is greeted by volunteers Bob Kubota, Marietta, Ohio; and Irwin T. Kuhns, Westerville, Ohio.

Throne, his hero and mentor.

His parents worked on the Julia Belle Swain when it operated out of Peoria. A young lad of 8-10 years of age, Vaughn discovered that he could steer the boat if he bribed the pilot with coffee.

On his first day on the boat he knew this is what he wanted to do and said he wanted to work on the Julia Belle Swain someday.

His parents . . . were incredulous. He was hooked on the river life.

Eventually the family moved to Columbus, Ohio. His family operated a river boat in Cincinnati, Ohio. That's where he became a pilot.

In 1987 his sister learned from singer/songwriter John Hartford that Throne was looking for a pilot. He borrowed money from his parents for bus transportation to the Quad Cities. Kevin Sker picked him up and Throne gave him a job.

There he met his future wife, Robin. After their marriage, they moved to Galena where Robin is owner of Simply Elegant. The couple have two sons, Connor, 27, Galena; and Bran, 25, Austin, Texas.

Through the years he's worked as a pilot of the Diamond Jo, boats in Chicago, the Twilight and now 12 years with Marquette Transportation Co.

He adds, "I wouldn't be here, though, if it weren't for Denny (Throne)."

It's evident that Vaughn loves the river. He loves being a pilot.

"This is something that not everyone can do," he says. "In fact we're a pretty small group of people who do this."

He loves the freedom of the job. There isn't anyone looking over his shoulder and yet he is responsible for operating a significant company



Richard Pearce works in the field. Contributed photo

Galena Center for the Arts plans exhibit of Richard Pearce artwork

GALENA—The Feature Gallery at the Galena Center for the Arts is filled with artwork by recently deceased artist/photographer Richard Pearce.

Pearce moved to Galena after retiring from a career in medical research and became the first person to experiment with the photo-scanning process on plants. He perfected the art, holding his first exhibit in 2003.

His high-quality photo scans grace the walls of museums and art studios throughout the region today. He finished scanning 358 speckles which are mostly available on his website (garnsimages.com/

UMWhind). His botanical work engaged many and fostered a greater appreciation for nature.

Pearce would trek through woods, prairies and along waterways throughout Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin obtaining high resolution images of plants, and close up, slow-motion videos of the insects that visit them.

A number of his works are on display, many of them for sale, as well as copies of his HD videos of close-ups of insects interacting with flowers in unusual and, in many cases, seemingly human ways; achieving shelter, food, and territorial dominance.



Women of Courage and Commitment include, back, from left, Roberta Grenz, Meggie Berning Jenkins, Susan Bang, Terrie Miller, Cathie Estbree; and front, from left, Emily Painter, Carmen Ferguson and Deb Pausz.

Women of Courage and Commitment celebrate 10th anniversary with free show at Galena Public Library

GALENA—On Thursday, Sept. 13 at 6 p.m., the theatrical group "Women of Courage and Commitment" will perform a free show at the Galena Public Library to celebrate their 10th year of bringing historical women to life in Galena.

Roberta Grenz and Debbie Pausz had an idea 10 years ago of doing a literary and/or historical fashion show. Their first show was presented at the Galena library and later that year for the Galena-10 Davess County Historical Society's annual meeting.

Fast forward 10 years and a group called The Women of Courage and Commitment is now performing monthly shows at the Desoto House Hotel. The group has changed throughout the years with some ladies leaving and new members joining the group.

Currently the company portrays the characters of Elizabeth Armstrong, defender of the Apple River Fort against Black Hawk and his warriors; Susan

asset. He likes the teamwork it takes to operate a barge on the Mississippi River.
The mystery of the river makes the job intriguing.
"I'm always curious about what is around the next bend," he says.
And when you get to that bend, the river and weather dictate your next steps.
"This is hard work. It's rewarding work," he says. After this trip there are even more memories to add to his treasure trove of river memories.

Dan Murphy, Galena, is also a riverboat pilot. When LST 325 passes Murphy's barge near Burlington, Iowa, Vaughn has shots fired off as a salute to his friend.

In LeClaire, Iowa, Sker guides the Twilight past LST 325.

Up and down the river, Vaughn says his fellow pilots treat LST 325 with reverence and respect. They share their appreciation of the crew.

He'll also remember the turnout as LST 325 locked through the locks and dams on its way up the river. In Bellevue more than 200 people came to watch.

"It was like a circus came to town," he says. That crowd hardly compares to the crowd on the boat this day and the long line that formed of those anxiously waiting the tour. As those in line buy their tickets, they share their stories—some had served on an LST—with crew members.

As he leaves the ship, Vaughn talks about feeling grateful. He's so grateful to have had this opportunity to volunteer his time and talents for something that is so important to so many people and do so on a river that's such an important part of his life.

Hemstead Grathol, an early pioneer woman of the River River Settlement; Sarah Coates, Harris one of the first board certified female physicians in Illinois; Adele Grathol Washburne, the first girl settler child born in Galena and a glittering political socialite among presidents and queens; Clarissa Emely Gear Hobbs, a compassionate nurse and the only known woman to be enlisted as a soldier in the American Civil War; Louisa Boggess, an Irish immigrant who made her life in Galena as a seamstress, and Susan B. Anthony, the intelligent, outspoken and celebrated civil rights activist.
Guest performers include Marlon Roberts as the confederate spy, Rose Greenhow, and Laura Keyes as Laura Ingalls Wilder.
For more information about adult programming at the library, contact adult services librarian Larissa Disher at 815-777-0200 or disherl@galenalibrary.org.