



NEWS RELEASE
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Rust Belt Brunch Cruise with Author Paul Hertneky
A Literary, Culinary & Heritage Event on the Explorer Riverboat

Homestead, PA (February 27, 2018)—Rivers of Steel announces its first heritage program aboard the *Explorer* riverboat. On Saturday, March 31, Paul Hertneky, author of the essay collection *Rust Belt Boy: Stories of an American Childhood* and Ambridge native, will treat guests to excerpt readings from the critically-acclaimed memoir. Guests will also enjoy a heritage-inspired brunch and a contextual narrative tour by Rivers of Steel historians during their three-hour cruise on the Monongahela River.

After acquiring the nonprofit formerly known as RiverQuest, Rivers of Steel relaunched STEM-based education programs in the fall of 2017 on the *Explorer* riverboat, continuing RiverQuest's mission. Now Rivers of Steel is expanding public programming options on the vessel as well. The *Rust Belt Brunch Cruise with Author Paul Hertneky* will be the first of many events intended to engage and educate public audiences and to broaden the narrative to include cultural heritage programming.

"Rivers of Steel is privileged to host Paul Hertneky for our inaugural public event on the *Explorer*," said August Carlino, president and CEO of Rivers of Steel. "The spirit of this book so closely aligns with our commitment to honor the cultural traditions of our region's past. For those of us who came of age in southwestern Pennsylvania at that time, these stories resonate with our own experiences—and for those who didn't grow up with ever-present smokestacks and cherished 'old-world' traditions, it's a wonderful introduction to a time that shaped our region."

Released in 2016, *Rust Belt Boy: Stories of an American Childhood* was praised from distinguished literary sources coast-to-coast. *The Los Angeles Review* declared "Particularly evocative writing... with beauty and clarity," and *Publisher's Weekly* found the writing to be "...honest, insightful, and empathetic." Sy Montgomery, a National Book Award Finalist, said "*Rust Belt Boy* brings to life in loving, lyric detail an essential but overlooked portrait of America's blue collar heart. It deserves to become a classic."

Through vivid storytelling, Hertneky's essay collection weaves through time and the smokestacks of Ambridge, Pa., inviting readers to share childhood experiences that will seem familiar to many locals.

The excerpts Hertneky will be reading will highlight themes around family and community traditions, life for a youngster in a company town, and a glimpse of characters that inhabited the author's world as a millworker. His recollections offer keen observations of a small town that was shaped by the industry that defined it and the immigrants that sustained it.

The curated program, which will have voyagers travelling from *Explorer's* dock at the headwaters of the Ohio and up the Monongahela River to Braddock before returning to the North Shore, seeks to elevate Hertneky's experiences with the addition of contextual narration and culinary accompaniment.

The tour portion of the cruise will introduce participants to the legacy of the Monongahela River as "the hardest working river in the world," and showcase the Carrie Blast Furnaces and the Edgar Thompson Works with a vantage point from the water. A menu from Prohibition Pastries was explicitly designed to celebrate the rich, ethnic culinary traditions of the region while appealing to a modern palate.

Seating for the special event is limited to 35 persons. It is scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. and conclude at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 31. Its timing on Easter weekend provides the opportunity for families to enjoy this experience together. Each participant receives a copy of the book, and will have the opportunity to have it signed by the author. Tickets are \$65 per person and can be purchased at www.riversofsteel.com or directly through [ShowClix](#).

About the Author

Over twenty-five years, Paul Hertneky has written stories, essays, and scripts for the *Boston Globe*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, NBC News, The Comedy Channel, *Gourmet*, *Eating Well*, *Traveler's Tales*, *The Exquisite Corpse*, National Public Radio, Public Radio International, *Adbusters*, and many more. He has won a Solas Award for travel writing and two James Beard Award nominations. A graduate of the Bennington Writing Seminars, he serves on the faculty of Chatham University and lives with his wife, Robbie, in Hancock, New Hampshire.

About Rivers of Steel

Founded on the principles of heritage development, community partnership, and a reverence for the region's natural and shared resources, Rivers of Steel strengthens the economic and cultural fabric of western Pennsylvania by fostering dynamic initiatives and transformative experiences.

Through its attractions and programs, Rivers of Steel actively promotes education and heritage tourism, highlighting western Pennsylvania's assets to regional, national and international audiences. Behind-the-scenes, Rivers of Steel works with a diverse network of community partners to support grassroots initiatives and the new regional economy.

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Images: The Rivers of Steel *Explorer* riverboat, author Paul Hertneky and the cover of *Rust Belt Boy: Stories of an American Childhood*

