

Jim McDowell's THE REZ NEWS

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MONDAY, JULY 18, 2011

The Friendship



For over 40 years The Friendship and her predecessor, the Melody Ann, have carried passengers on voyages around the Barnett Reservoir.

The boat belongs to Fr. Edward Balsler, a Catholic priest who has served parishes in the Jackson area for over 50 years.

Fr. Balsler was the priest at St. Jude's Catholic Church in Pearl when the reservoir opened in the mid-1960's. He had the idea to start a church ministry at the Barnett Reservoir.

Weekends would find him with a group of children swimming and enjoying the water. The demand soon outgrew the capacity of his small runabout and the idea to build a houseboat was born.

With friends and volunteers he built the Melody Ann, a 24 x 10 houseboat.



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Fr. Balsler - 1967

The Melody Ann was expanded 8 times to accommodate a growing demand from the church, finally the decision was to build a larger boat.

And a big boat was built, the Friendship 1- a triple decker.



The Friendship I served the church and the community well but had a difficult life - it sank 3 times.

One of the episodes occurred when a group of Callaway High School students rushed to one side of the top deck causing it to sink. Weather was responsible for the other incidents. A TRN article about one of the accidents can be seen [here](#).

Later, fire swept through the boat while moored at Main Harbor Marina, it was a total loss.

Fr. Balsler promptly made plans for the Friendship II

Pontoons were constructed and moved to the parking lot at Madison Landing where Fr. Balsler and a group of volunteers completed the boat.

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The boat sits atop two 98' pontoons, it's powered by two 150hp Cummins diesel engines that can power the huge craft at speeds up to 12mph.

The Friendship is busy - about 110 trips a year, it's popular for parties, reunions and church groups.



Fr. Balsler (seated) and Captain Danny Doty

Captain Danny Doty handles the pilot duties, both Danny and Fr. Balsler are U.S. Coast Guard licensed Captains.

The Friendship II is located in Main Harbor and available for charters.

For availability and rate information call 601-862-3569.

The Rez News
Ross Barnett Reservoir

Posted by The Rez News at [7/18/2011 02:32:00 AM](#)

5 comments:

Anonymous said...

The article on the "Friendship" brings back memories, had my High School graduation party on the Melody Ann some 40 years ago. So glad Father Balsler is doing well.

[July 18, 2011 at 6:57 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

I have so many fond memories of the Friendship and Father Balsler myself! I hope he continues to be a light in this community!

[July 18, 2011 at 10:03 AM](#)

Lottie said...

u r 2 GOOD!!!!We all appreciate all your time makin this REZ NEWS our daily news...lots of work for u. Lots of fun for me!! Keep up the good work! I read it everyday...instead of the Clarion Ledger! thanks, Lottieda

On Nov 10 [Jerry Gonzalez](#) commented on [alligator hunting season approaches](#)

Thank you for what you are sharing very helpful.

On Nov 09 [Bulbul Ahmed](#) commented on [new residential development coming to](#)

Nice to be visiting your blog again, it has been months for me. Well...(more)

On Nov 06 [Anonymous](#) commented on [rankin county sample ballot november 5](#)

There must be a complete and total lack of common sense when it comes...(more)

On Nov 05 [Anonymous](#) commented on [northshore landing subdivision](#)

I moved onto Old Fannin when it was a 2 lane road. Lived through...(more)

On Nov 04 [coach](#) commented on [northshore landing subdivision football](#)

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Cool news bro

On Nov 02 [Anonymous](#) commented on [expect delays on spillway road starting](#)

I spent an hour and a half stuck in traffic on lower Spillway Road...(more)

On Oct 27 [RWX](#) commented on [rankin hinds flood control district](#)

The purpose of the lake is control flooding by making it easier for...(more)

On Oct 20 [junk removal companies](#) commented on [trash on sandbars](#)

Very informative and useful. Keep us posted as people frequently need...(more)

[July 18, 2011 at 5:33 PM](#)

merck said...

ditto on everything Lottieda sed! thanks TRN

[July 18, 2011 at 10:15 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Ah yes, the memories. My fraternity from Millsaps College chartered it around 1976-77 for a party. We had a great time and Father Balsler told us never to come back.

[March 19, 2012 at 10:35 AM](#)

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