

Many thanks to those who supported us and egged us on in the production of this CD: Steve Steckler, recording engineer, itinerant bass player and choral consultant, whose studio at was so tantalizingly close to the barbecued ribs at Mid Atlantic Seafood that we just had to record there. And to his children Sophia and Magdalena Steckler and their friends Thea and Asher Henry who make up the Crabernacle Choir.

Chelle Fulk, our fabulous fiddlist friend, who generously gave of her time and talent to make sure this music saw the light of day, and who made Janie simply do it again (and again and again) till it was right.

Mike Lange for his boogie piano

Rowen Corbett for dem bones

Glen McCarthy for occasional bass and ready smile

Frank Cassel the banjoman

Bob Zentz for his big black button box

Karen Ashley for her cover design

Maureen Gillmer for her cover photos (that's Peale Rogers tending his pound net)

And to you our fans without whose enthusiastic tendency to learn our words better than we do, we would be hard-pressed to get through an entire concert with all verses intact.

All songs herein written by Janie Meneely except for Ladies of the Bay, by Dody Welsh Parris (copyright 1988) and Chesapeake Café by the students at the Chesapeake Public Charter School in Lexington Park, Md. (copyright 2009). All vocals are Janie and/or Paul (with the aforementioned Chesapeake Crabernacle Choir chiming in on Freezin' Our Butts Off and Chesapeake Café). Paul plays guitar (we'll tell you if it's Janie on guitar), Chelle plays fiddle and Steve plays bass when bass there is, unless otherwise noted.

### Susquehanna Suzy

This song goes out to the late Brenda Guldenzopf, whose unflagging support of Janie's music, of music in general, plus her tireless work for the Havre de Grace Maritime Museum sets her high on our heroes' shelf. The last time we saw her, about a month before she passed away from breast cancer, Janie promised her a song about the northern Bay. While this song does little to recall the thriving shad industry or the waterfowling or the lumber or the granite that emanated from that neck of the world, it at least echoes the passion people feel for the workboats that keep them and their labors afloat regardless of where they might be.

Susquehanna Suzy is a scrappy little deadrise workboat that Janie either saw or thought she saw working out on the Susquehanna Flats one day. Here's to love, here's to Brenda, here's to every vessel that ever captured a captain's heart.

### Heading Back to Reedville (The Stack Song)

When last we checked, Reedville, a tiny town on the Northern Neck of Virginia, remains in the number two spot for the greatest haul-out (in pounds) of fish in the entire U.S. (A town in Alaska is number one and a town in Louisiana is number three.) That's pretty amazing for a little metropolis that comprises one main street, a couple of terrific eateries and the charming Reedville Fishermen's Museum. What's even more amazing is that all that poundage comes from such small fish: menhaden. Oil, fertilizer and fish meal from the vast schools of menhaden that drifted in and out of the Bay fueled the local economy to such a degree that

the town of 500 was once dubbed the wealthiest in the nation. Rendering plants dotted the shoreline of Cockrell Creek where “the smell of money” hung heavy in the air. Omega Protein is the only factory still going full tilt, harvesting menhaden that is drawn primarily from the Atlantic Ocean. Only vestiges of the other processing plants remain, including one tall smoke stack that stands where the Morris-Fisher Company once processed tons of menhaden. Called the Tall Stack by the locals, this particular remnant of the old plant has served as a beacon of sorts, guiding fishermen home to Reedville for nearly a hundred years. When Omega Protein (which owns the site now) announced plans to topple the structure due to safety concerns (it was slowly coming down all by itself), the public outcry was passionate. “Save the Stack” became the mantra for Reedville residents who wanted to preserve their oldest aid to navigation as well as one of the last reminders of the menhaden plants that built the town.

Paul and Janie were invited to perform at the Reedville Fishermen’s Museum just as the Save the Stack effort was getting underway. Not one to miss a songwriting opportunity, Janie managed to scribble out the original version of this song the night before the gig (Paul was already in bed); they practiced it in the car on the way from DC to the Northern Neck. The song was well received, to say the least. Now that the stack has been rebuilt and reinforced, Janie tweaked the last verse and the original chorus. She’s playing the guitar, and Frank Cassel is playing banjo (check him out at [www.banjomanfc.com](http://www.banjomanfc.com)).

### Ladies of the Bay

Back when the earth was still cooling, Jeff Holland, Chris Noyes, Dody Welsh Parris and Janie formed a little group called Crab Alley, dedicated to the task of ferreting out traditional Chesapeake Bay music that they could sing in lieu of (or along with) the New England sea chanteys they loved so well. Coming up all but empty-handed, they set about creating their own body of music derived from all things Chesapeake. They called it “Tomorrow’s Traditions Today” and vowed that when people next looked for Bay material, they would find at least one repository that reflected life on these shores. At that time Dody Parris was a sail maker living in St. Michaels (now she’s in Centreville: Chesapeake Canvas and Sails). Like so many of us, she lamented the demise of the fleet of working skipjacks that used to stud the Bay in the gray winter months, and she wanted to commemorate them in a song. Her goal was to cite every skipjack then afloat, but the first chorus she penned (the one you hear on the recording) stuck: “Rebecca Ruark, Stanley Norman, Kathryn, Caleb Jones, their names ring out a chorus that echoes in my bones.” Magically, those four vessels remain active on the water today. Rebecca Ruark, captained by the indomitable Wadey Murphy, dredges for tourists out of Dogwood Harbor (Tilghman island); Stanley Norman is owned and operated as a school vessel by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; newly restored by her owner Captain Stoney Whitelock, Kathryn sails out of Deal Island; Caleb Jones, one of the younger of the Bay skipjacks (built in 1953), was recently rebuilt by the Lady Maryland Foundation as part of the Save Our Skipjacks (SOS) initiative and still works the water out of Wenona (Deal Island).

Over the years (and long after Dody herself was no longer part of Crab Alley) Ladies of the Bay became one of Crab Alley’s signature songs, recorded as a duet by Jeff Holland and Janie. This version of it is a more straightforward Janie solo (Janie on guitar as well), with Paul adding vocal harmonies and harmonica.

## Freezin' Our Butts Off

Speaking of skipjacks, one thing most watermen can agree on about dredging for oysters is that sooner or later in the process they find themselves freezing their butts off on the Bay. Watermen harvest oysters in the winter months. Dredgers leave the dock in the wee hours of the morning so they can be on top of the oyster rock by dawn. By the time they have their limit (or are ready to call it a day) daylight is starting to fade. While the Chesapeake region offers a fairly benign winter climate—some winter days are full of sun, and daylight temperatures in the 60s aren't uncommon—there are plenty of times when a sharp wind cuts through your bones and the watery sunshine can't even defrost your breath. On days like that, a waterman is most certainly freezin' his butt off as he hauls up the dredges and culls through the oysters.

Janie performs this song a lot as part of her school program (Chesapeake Songs and Stories). She's been told by some educators that "freezin' our butts off" is a rude and vulgar expression and that "butts" is not a word they permit their students to use. When that is the case, Janie stresses the fact that the song uses waterman's language which is not appropriate for school children except in the context of the song's chorus. Paul offers a different tack: the song, he says, refers to what is happening on deck to a Russian immigrant, Sergei Arbutzoff, recently shanghaied off a Baltimore dock. To placate school authorities Paul's words are "We're freezin' Arbutzoff on Chesapeake Bay." Whichever way you prefer to "hear" it, that's Janie on concertina, with Glen McCarthy on bass and Rowen Corbett on bones.

## Morning Watch

Another song from the Crab Alley days, Morning Watch is one of Janie's most requested, so here it is again for round two. The imagery for the song comes from a time in Janie's wild and crazy youth when she was part of a delivery crew taking the yacht Scaramouche down the coast from the Bay to Florida. She left Annapolis at around 1 p.m. on a grey November day and glided past Norfolk the next morning as the sun was just beginning to rise. It was her first overnight sailing adventure and the start of a series of deliveries that left a vivid mark in her brain. The "little sloop" reference, though, goes back to naval architect and Bay sailor Ernie Tucker, a business associate of her father's, who owned a tiny sloop called the Half Pint. It was love at first sight when he saw her moored in the West River, just off the Chalk Point Road. Chelle adds the lovely fiddle tune A Bright Morning (#426 from O'Neill's Music of Ireland collection; [celtic-sheet-music.com/musicofireland.html](http://celtic-sheet-music.com/musicofireland.html)).

## Big Liz

The lower Eastern Shore of Maryland is riddled with swamps, especially around the Blackwater Refuge, where the watershed stretches from below Cambridge to the Nanticoke River. At one edge of the Blackwater system lies the Green Briar Swamp, where the ghost of Big Liz guards a cache of gold. According to those in the know—local fifth graders mostly—Big Liz was a slave woman whose master trafficked with the Confederate army during the Civil War. Readying a shipment of gold, the slave master feared that Big Liz would carry the information to a nearby Yankee camp. He told her to help him haul the gold to the swamp and then dig a hole deep enough to bury it. When the hole was dug, he grabbed the shovel

and whacked her upside the head (knowledgeable fourth graders say the head came clean off) and left her dead body in the hole along with the gold. For reasons lost to history, the gold was never recovered and Big Liz still guards it, making sure it doesn't fall into Confederate hands. Stories abound from people who have ventured into the swamp for one reason or another and encountered . . . well, something that just gives them the willies.

That's Mike Lange, playing the piano, with Rowen Corbett on percussion and Glen McCarthy on bass.

### Ballad of Berkeley Muse

Once railheads and modern packing methods made oysters a viable trade commodity, the price of the tasty little bivalves soared. Oysters meant big money and the industry boomed. Dredgeboats hauled up hundreds of bushels a day while individual tongers could harvest a boatload on their own. The massive oyster reefs that laced the Bay were considered a menace to navigation, so no one really objected as eager watermen dismantled them bit by bit. The boom couldn't last, though, and the open market of the Bay bottom created tension as Maryland watermen vs Virginia watermen, tongers vs dredgers all vied for the same resource, sometimes with guns blazing and fists flying. Eventually Maryland established the Oyster Navy to patrol its waterways, including the Potomac River, and try to maintain order. By the end of World War II, the oyster harvest had diminished substantially, and the battle for oysters among those who remained in the business had become even more contentious. This was particularly true on the Potomac River, where Virginia watermen with their power dredges had easy access to Maryland waters where power dredging was illegal. At night Virginians would slip out to the oyster beds and help themselves. The Oyster Navy, by this time armed with bow-mounted machine guns, had its hands full.

One April night in 1959, Berkeley Muse, a Colonial Beach real estate developer, went along for the midnight ride aboard his friend's dredgeboat. It was for a lark, really. But the bullet that tore through his chest that night, coming from an Oyster Navy patrol boat, was dead serious.

Marylanders and Virginians alike were horrified at such a show of force. It hardly made sense to kill someone over a few bushels of oysters. The brouhaha that followed brought about the creation of the bi-state Potomac River Fisheries Commission to oversee the river. It remains in effect today.

Janie is on guitar here.

### Waterman's Wish

It took a while to come up with just the right ending for this little ditty, but finally the joke snapped together. "Natty Boh" is National Beer, brewed right here on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and a long time favorite of crab pickers everywhere. Rowen Corbett brings the song to life with his clackety bones.

### Living by the River

It wasn't hard to pick the title song for this CD. Living by the River is a song we've been kicking around for years, and it seemed to be thematic of this project in general. After all, most of the songs here are all about living by the water, working on the water or just generally celebrating our Chesapeake heritage. That's Janie on guitar.

### The Devil and St. Pete

This is yet another of Janie's songs from the Crab Alley days. Inspiration for the lyrics comes from Joshua Thomas, a waterman-turned-Methodist minister who preached in the early part of the 19th century. He was dubbed the Parson of the Islands because he sailed his log canoe, *The Methodist*, all around the Lower Eastern Shore spreading the gospel to any and all. Whether or not it was his doing, the Eastern Shore remains a hotbed of Methodism today, especially in the watermen's communities.

Joshua Thomas was living on Tangier Island when the British occupied the place during the War of 1812. He made the famous prediction that Baltimore would stand fast against the British attack. When the war was over he continued his ministry, eventually moving his family and flock to Deal Island where they built a chapel and later a church.

Joshua Thomas made quite an impression on people. His memory is still revered—one of the Liberty Ships of World War II was named after him—and his biography, *The Parson of the Islands*, written in 1861 shortly after his death, remains on the shelves of bookstores and museum shops around the Eastern Shore. Janie wanted to write a song to commemorate this remarkable man, but hard as she tried, this little ditty kept edging across the page. Finally she realized that these words, as much as anything else she could have written, bear testimony to a man of great faith such as Joshua Thomas, and so it is his song indeed. Janie plays the whistle.

### Thomas Steinheise

Built in 1855 the Seven-Foot Knoll Lighthouse used to sit at the mouth of the Patapsco River, guiding ships up the channel to Baltimore. Originally keepers and their families tended the light, but by 1919 only a pair of keepers remained in charge. They stayed together for two weeks out of the month, then worked alone while their partner went on shore leave for a week.

Life was fairly routine until one stormy night in August of 1933 (a few days before the terrible hurricane, in fact). Powerful winds swept the Bay, and Thomas Steinheise (or Steinhise or Steinhice depending on which account you read) heard the distress whistle from the tugboat *Point Breeze* as the vessel foundered on the shoal. Some accounts say a mysterious hand upon his shoulder woke him from his sleep. He thought it was his son Earl who was with him at the time, but Earl himself was awakened by the storm. Regardless of how he came awake, Steinhiese wasted no time in readying and launching the lifeboat. The lifeboat's engine, however, wasn't up to the challenge of 15-foot seas. When it stalled, Steinheise was upwind of the wreck. Maneuvering with his rudder and a single oar he was able to sweep down on the crew, by now struggling in the waves. Singlehandedly, he hauled six men aboard his boat (one had already drowned) before turning back toward the

lighthouse. By then another ship had come to the rescue, and Steinheise was satisfied that the rest of the endangered crew would be safe. But now the storm was against him and his boat was heavy with the rescued crewmen. It took him an hour to get them finally to the safety of the lighthouse. For his valor, he was awarded a Silver Lifesaving Medal by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Seven-Foot Knoll Lighthouse was automated in 1948, and in 1977 the structure was moved to a land-based site at the Baltimore Maritime Museum where it is part of the Living Classrooms campus.

Bob Zentz plays one of his button accordions in the background, and rounds out the song with a rendition of Johnny Todd, the traditional tune that Janie “channeled” for the Thomas Steinheise melody.

### South County, Oh

Several years ago Janie was asked to contribute a song to the Roots and Tides Driving Tour of southern Anne Arundel County (affectionately referred to as South County). She was quick to comply. The song fell out of her pen within days. Once upon a time when her daughter was quite young, they lived in a little house in Shady Side, a community across the water from Galesville, at the mouth of the West River and deep in the heart of South County. Tobacco fields still lined the roads and life centered around horses, farming and the water. There are plenty more people living down that way now, and many of the farms have been cut up into residential swatches, but the “feel” of the place remains the same, with country roads curling around horse pastures and dead-ending at boatyards. That’s Janie on guitar. Frank Cassel adds banjo to the mix.

### Chesapeake Café

Students at the Chesapeake Public Charter School in Lexington Park, Md., wrote this song with Janie as part of a week-long songwriting extravaganza under the direction of music teacher Tara Gates. Mike Lange chimes in on piano, Glen McCarthy on bass, Rowen Corbett on percussion and the Chesapeake Crabernacle Choir again, noodling in on the chorus. It was very good. It was very good.