

PRESS RELEASE

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JAHA to host two book presentations to mark 1977 Johnstown flood

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. -- The Johnstown Area Heritage Association (JAHA) will host two book presentations in July to mark the 30-year anniversary of the Johnstown flood of July 20, 1977. The events are free and open to the public. To RSVP for either or both, call JAHA at 814-539-1889 x301.

Monday, July 9

Disaster's Wake: A Retrospective of the 1977 Johnstown Flood

Book presentation and panel discussion

7:00 p.m. at the Heritage Discovery Center

This panel discussion will feature several of the individuals profiled in Disaster's Wake: A Retrospective of the 1977 Johnstown Flood, a new book published by *The Tribune-Democrat*. The book includes the stories of many people who were affected by the 1977 flood, as well as a great deal of previously unpublished photography of the disaster. Published in a limited-edition format, more than 1,700 copies of the hardback book have already been sold.

The panel members will discuss their experiences in 1977, and will also take questions from the audience. At this time, the panel will include:

- Gilbert Weakland, administrator of '77 Flood Relief Center
- Ed Cernic, owner of Cernic Honda and Suzuki, resident of Tanneryville in 1977
- Judy Strittmatter, whose sister and niece were swept out a car and killed at the Route 56 bypass
- Chuck Mamula, photographer for *The Tribune-Democrat* in 1977
- Tom Kurtz, Red Cross worker in 1977, now a vice president with Conemaugh Health System
- Denny Grenell, marketer with Johnstown Bank & Trust in 1977, charged with leading the "We Will Rebuild Together" campaign
- Roxanne Sabo, who was a child at the time of the flood and lost her mother, father and younger sister

The panel will be led by Chip Minemyer, editor of the *The Tribune-Democrat*. The presentation will also include some of the 1977 flood photography featured in the book.

"This book includes many moving stories that allow those who experienced the flood to talk about what they saw, heard and felt -- in their own words. Taken together, the stories and photographs provide perhaps the most extensive history ever done on this tragic and important event in the region's history," Minemyer said.

Light refreshments will be served; copies of the book will be available for purchase, and members of the panel will be available to sign them. This event is sponsored by *The Tribune-Democrat*, *Johnstown Magazine* and JAHA.

Thursday, July 19

"The 1977 Flood"

A presentation by Randy Whittle, author of Johnstown, Pennsylvania: A History, Part Two, 1937-1980

7:00 p.m. at the Heritage Discovery Center

In April 2006, author Randy Whittle presented the first book in his history of Johnstown at the Heritage Discovery Center. Whittle has now completed the second book, Johnstown, Pennsylvania: A History, Part Two, 1937-1980, which includes a comprehensive analysis of the 1977 flood. Whittle will return to JAHA on July 19, a day before the actual flood anniversary, to make a special presentation on the 1977 flood. Light refreshments will be served. Copies of the book will be available for purchase, and Whittle will sign copies upon request.

"JAHA is pleased to be able to host two different, very worthwhile presentations about the flood," said Richard Burkert, executive director of JAHA. "*The Tribune-Democrat's* panel discussion will focus more on the stories of people who lived through the flood, while Randy Whittle's presentation will be an analysis of the catastrophe. Both are compelling ways to look at an event that had a profound effect on our community."

Both Disaster's Wake: A Retrospective of the 1977 Flood and Johnstown, Pennsylvania: A History, Part Two, 1937-1980 are available in the gift shops of the Johnstown Flood Museum and Heritage Discovery Center, and may also be purchased online at JAHA's website, www.jaha.org.

The Johnstown Area Heritage Association is a non-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to preserving and showcasing Johnstown's unique history to the nation through high-quality educational, cultural and recreational experiences. In addition to the Johnstown Flood Museum, the Frank & Sylvia Pasquerilla Heritage Discovery Center, and the Wagner-Ritter House & Garden, JAHA produces the AmeriServ Johnstown FolkFest, a 3-day free music festival held annually over Labor Day weekend; flood commemoration events; and a wide variety of additional cultural programming. The Johnstown Children's Museum is currently under construction and will open in late 2007. For more information on JAHA programs, museums and events, visit www.jaha.org.

