

2025 MEMPHIS-AREA ACTIVITIES (Continued)

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SAVE THE DATE IN MAY

Thursday, May 8, 2025 – Tom Lee 100th Anniversary Ceremony

Time: 11:00 AM

Location: Memphis Light, Gas and Water David F. Hansen Administration Building, 220 South Main St

Sponsoring Organization: Engineers' Club of Memphis <https://www.engineersclubofmemphis.com/>

May 8, 2025, marks the 100th Anniversary of Tom Lee's heroic rescue of thirty-two survivors of the steamship *M. E. Norman*. On May 8, 1925, the Engineers' Club of Memphis (ECM) was host for the Mid-South Association of Engineers Convention of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), including national officers and members. As part of the convention, engineers and their families were invited on a sightseeing trip to inspect revetment work along the banks of the Mississippi River. Because of the large number of attendees, two ships were needed. These ships, *Choctaw* and *M. E. Norman*, were operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The *M.E. Norman* had 72 passengers and crew on board.

Tom Lee, who had been hired to cut willows for the C. W. Hunter, Co., had taken a company official to Helena, Arkansas in his 28' motorboat, the *Zev*. Lee was headed back home to Memphis when he passed the *M. E. Norman*. He had gone half a mile when he looked back and saw the steamship was in trouble.

The *M. E. Norman* capsized and sank. Seventeen people were able to swim to safety. Tom Lee rescued 32 people with five trips to shore. Lee acted quickly, calmly, and with no regard for his own safety, continuing to search after night fell. Because of his efforts, only 23 people died.

The Engineers' Club of Memphis will commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Tom Lee's heroic rescue of thirty-two survivors of the steamship *M. E. Norman*, with a short, respectful, 30-minute ceremony focused on Tom Lee, his accomplishments, and his legacy. The ceremony will also recognize the twenty-three people whose lives were lost, some of whom were ECM and ASCE members.