



(Ed Preston)

## ***Pickett Hastings***

**Capt. Ike Hastings  
Freeport, Ill.**

When I was five years old my father and another man built a flat-bottom boat. I watched the whole project. Every time he wanted to go fishing I had his rowboat. He decided when I was in the second grade to help me build a small flat-bottom boat. That was boat #1. While in grade school we built more boats, including a 20-footer with a cabin. We bought a big fly-wheel, single-cylinder inboard from a clammer for \$5, complete with shaft, packing box, screw and rudder. We woke everybody in town up at 5 in the morning going upriver to run set lines. It was really slick, if you flipped the spark lever it would run backwards. I built racing boats and other boats for my two sons, inboard cabin cruisers and work boats for commercial fishing.

The *Pickett Hastings* is a 98-foot sternwheeler with a hull entirely of aluminum. I believe that was boat #47. During a normal summer, I go down the Mississippi to Cairo, Ill., and up the Ohio River to West Virginia and Pittsburgh. We participate in sternwheel races and party with fellow sternwheel friends for four or five months, taking only my dog, Belle, and my parrot, Harry. Different towns have sternwheel regattas where there could be 25 to 30 boats. Most have Sunday sternwheel races. I've had to break ice getting back to port in Dubuque, Iowa.

The boat has wood stoves, a diesel furnace, hot and cold running water, bamboo hardwood flooring and a 40-foot front deck. A Cummins diesel engine runs the hydraulics that turn the paddlewheel.

Newt Marine, in the Ice Harbor in Dubuque, Iowa, has always taken very good care of me, for several generations. The grandson runs the company now. Eldon was my original benefactor, and Gary, his son, is a wonderful friend.

Anybody who doesn't spend time on our beautiful rivers is literally "missing the boat!" To fish or just watch the water go by is one of life's greatest pleasures.