

## CASE STUDY

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# Historic Riverboat Sails Again with Revamped Plumbing System

A heavy-duty grinder pump from Saniflo upgrades the historic River Queen's antiquated plumbing system, allowing it to get back on the water.

BY TONY BARA

Old-timers in Elkhart, Indiana, tell the story of local mason Red Macumber who, in the 1940s and 1950s, built a riverboat from scratch, using an engine he had lifted from a sunken vessel at the bottom of nearby Lake Michigan. He named the vessel the River Queen, and it became a pleasure craft for decades on the Saint Joseph River.

The boat eventually passed to Macumber's grandson and other owners until 2013, when it was condemned by the Department of Natural Resources for having a rusted hull.



Elkhart's prized River Queen, built in the 1940s, is now sailing again, thanks in part to a Sanibest Pro grinding system from Saniflo.

In recent years, "there was a huge local push to restore the historic vessel," says long-time resident Dave Dickman, general contractor and owner of Dave's Custom Building and Construction, which took on the River Queen project. After passionate townsfolk raised the necessary funds and fixed the hull, the River Queen sailed once again on Independence Day 2016. But then a new problem soon arose.

"The plumbing wastewater system was very antiquated," recalls Dickman. "The previous pump that moved the solid waste from the on-board toilet to the holding tank soon failed. We needed to find a cost-effective, reliable system that would get this dirty job done."

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## Pumping it Out

Dickman's search did not last long. More than a decade prior, he had been introduced to macerating technology from Saniflo by John Haas, former president of [Central Hardware and Plumbing Supply](#). Today, Haas works in a technical and advisory capacity for Central's current president Rob Stewart. "We've been a plumbing supply dealer and authorized service center here in Elkhart for 60 years and have been working with Dave for many of them," says Stewart.

"Installing a grinding pump on the River Queen was the common-sense solution," explains Haas. Previously, solid waste had been pumped out in its entirety. After the old pump gave out, Dickman could have installed a sewage ejector system with a large diameter hose, but that would have been a costly proposition, in contrast to the Saniflo solution, according to Haas: "The Saniflo system grinds the waste, which allows for a smaller-diameter line and an overall cleaner discharge," he explains.

"I had been installing Saniflo for years and never had a callback," says Dickman. For the River Queen, he decided to go with the Sanibest Pro heavy-duty grinding system, which can easily handle the accidental flushing of sanitary articles, such as feminine products, baby wipes, dental floss, condoms, etc. The 1-HP pump can move effluent upward to 25 feet and/or 150 feet horizontally. It was donated by Saniflo and Central Hardware and Plumbing Supply. "We wanted to make sure we could handle anything our passengers threw down there," explains Dickman.

The installation took Dickman roughly two hours. The grinder system, serving the urinal and toilet in the bathroom on the lower deck, moves waste upward six feet through a 1-inch discharge line, almost directly to the engine room's holding tank above. "Being able to pump the grinded waste directly upward means less wear-and-tear on the equipment," Dickman explains.

From there, the waste is drained into the local sewer system from the side of the vessel, using a 50-foot, 3/4-inch hose. "The ability to employ the smaller-diameter pipes and hose saved us on material costs," says Dickman.

Overall, wholesaler Haas estimates that choosing Saniflo over a more complicated sewage ejector system saved the project hundreds, if not a thousand, dollars.



Installer Dave Dickman installs the heavy duty Sanibest Pro grinding system from Saniflo.

## Sailing Ahead

Now fully operational with a working plumbing system, the River Queen continues to host weddings, graduations and other special events as it cruises along the Saint Joseph River. The 70-foot by 20-foot boat holds anywhere from 75 to 120 passengers on each two- to four-hour cruise.

Everything is performing so well, there are discussions to open cruises up to the public on Sundays. “The River Queen is such a historic icon in Elkhart, we would love for everyone to have the opportunity to sail her,” says Dickman. “The high-performing grinder pump we installed is crucial to making this possible.”

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**SFA SANIFLO U.S.A.** — whose parent company originated macerating plumbing technology — offers a complete line of up-flush toilets and gray water pumping systems for residential and commercial applications. Saniflo developed its innovative, “above-floor plumbing” technology more than a half-century ago and has led its commercialization worldwide. Today, the company markets macerating technology through 24 subsidiaries in 50 countries and has sold more than seven million units worldwide since 1958. Saniflo markets through independent sales agents throughout North America, and the product line is currently available at distributor and dealer locations throughout the United States and Canada.

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