

# Hanging out with Steady Eddy

And Captain Jack, The Indian,  
The Catfish, and Guacamole.  
Not to mention Steady's wife  
Dyna Ann and grandson Bugs.

I never knew Ed Teela when he played for the Monona Lakers and was throwing his fastball in the Home Talent League.

I never knew him when he played for the 101st Airborne and was throwing his body out of airplanes.

I met him in his mellowed-out years, and the only things I've seen him throwing are usually attached to fishing poles.

He is the classic example of a person who chucked everything and got into a new line of work because he was fed-up with his old line of work. His old line of work was selling cars. His new line is selling fish bait. He wouldn't go back.

His shop is on Blair Street and nobody there calls him Lefty or Smoke or Trooper anymore. They call him Steady Eddy.

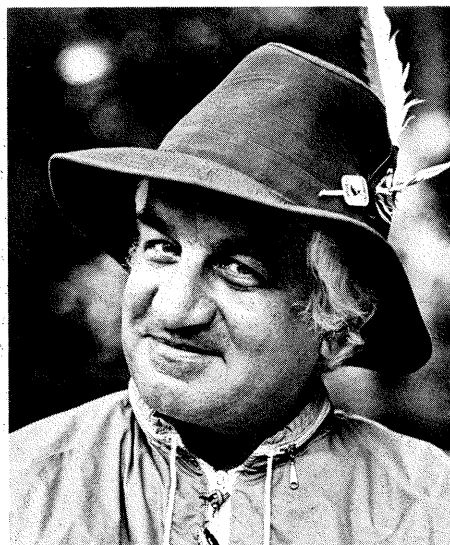
Most everyone who is serious about fishing the Madison lakes knows about him, not to mention the cast of characters that he hangs out with: Captain Jack, The Indian, The Catfish, and Guacamole. Steady has a wife called Dyna Ann and a grandson called Bugs. Bugs was the first to call her that because he couldn't pronounce "Diane." Guess who hung "Bugs" on the kid?

Steady says he really fell in love with the Wisconsin outdoors when the 101st came up to old Camp McCoy for a training exercise and reservist pilots were flying the boxcars.

"We were past the drop zone when the green light came on," Steady remembers. "We were over the forest primeval when the light came and we went."

Coming down in that green woods, he says, convinced him to stop jumping

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around and settle down here. Such is the stuff of legend. There is other stuff, too, and sitting on the February ice the memories are as warming as a belt of brandy.

There was the time that Steady gave up smoking cigars. The Indian and I were recalling that only the week before Steady had been smoking like the Vatican stove and now here he was serene as the Buddha, opening his can of Copenhagen snuff.

We watched in fascination as he dug into the box daintily, got a lot more than the proverbial pinch, opened his mouth like a bluegill approaching a popper and tucked the smokeless powder under his lower lip. His eyes looked faraway.

"I hate to see him so content," The Indian said. "He was more creative when he was nervous and all strung-out."

"I smoked 20 pounds of back ribs last night," Steady said finally, "in the Weber grill."

"As long as you don't inhale," The

Indian said, "I can dig it."

Steady kicked the snooze before it became a habit though. He went back to cigars.

There was the time we fished Monona on a raw, windy day that was as cold as a well digger's knees. The stiff north wind pumped muscle into the little Merc on the stern. We practically flew across the lake.

Bundled like Pond Inlet Eskimos, we fished Squaw Bay. We fished the river. We drifted under the Beltline Bridge into the widespread. We fished for one hour. Two hours. Three hours. We got skunked. We got frozen. And when we tried to come back across the open lake, we got scared.

We went back to one of Steady's friends on the river and called Catfish to come get us with his car.

Steady's friend had two sailfish mounted on the rec-room walls and Steady suggested that if I took one, I wouldn't be skunked. I suggested that if he took the other, neither would he.

"Naw," he said. "Two sailfish from Monona on a day like this. Who would believe it?"

Then there was the Friday night we reached the end of an era. The passing of an age. The death of an institution. The night they closed The 400 Bar forever.

We were there. Steady. The Indian. Even Frank Custer. We were all crying in our beers because the die was cast. One more landmark gone. Going the way of the buffalo. Going the way of the passenger pigeon. Not to mention the passenger train.

Nobody had organized an angry protest.

"Nobody cares," Steady said.

"No Body," The Indian said.

"It is," Frank Custer observed, "an

historical occasion and who gives a damn?"

"That's right," The Indian said. "But just let them close a school and people show up in droves."

We talked about all the folks who had passed through these portals and who always had their priorities on straight. Fishermen. Reporters. Even train people in the olden days when there used to be trains here.

"It was always like Spoon River," Custer said. "With barstools."

We drank a beer to the troubled spirits who would have done the same for us.

Custer fell — leaned, actually — strangely silent then, and Steady said later he kind of sensed what the *ex-Capital Times* man was thinking. To be out on strike during the *longest* winter on record. The *coldest* spring. And now

this . . . it was too much for a body to bear.

"I am going to take up fishing," Frank Custer said.

We left him there at the bar, fighting the good fight, making his last stand.

"You keep closing the saloons," James Roy Miller used to warn us when Steady Eddy was still jumping out of airplanes, "and you'll kill the free press in America." ■

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