



Carl Haring at the Wisner Minnow Hatchery, Inc. in Wisner, Louisiana

HOW MINNOWS AND CATFISH HELPED SHAPE A FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

CARL HARING, WISNER MINNOW HATCHERY, INC.

Way out in the fields of Wisner, Louisiana, you'll be hard-pressed to find anything that resembles the hustle and bustle of big-city life. However, what you will find is Carl Haring and his family hard at work continuing a three-generation long

family tradition of serving up a proud Louisiana tradition. Haring Catfish is a family-owned processing plant that has its roots buried deep in the muddy waters of Wisner.



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► *continued on page 3*

AN AWARD WINNING "SCHOOL" OF THOUGHT

► *continued from page 1*

This story's humble beginnings take place in the cotton fields of Belzoni, Mississippi. Here, Carl's father, Walter Carl Haring, Sr. aka "Pete", worked these dusty fields of white gold picking cotton from the early age of 7. Pete worked the fields for the next nine years, then relocated to Memphis, Tennessee, where he began trade school to become a Machinist. Fast forward to 1948, and Pete, now a grown man with military service under his belt, founded a logging and sawmilling partnership with an associate of his, Wade Buffkin. The two enjoyed their growing success and quite literally cleared a path to a new venture.

In 1950, Pete bought a little cafe in the tiny town of Sicily Island, Louisiana, named "Charley's." Patrons could snag a great bite to eat and then dance the night away, as it doubled as a dance hall. A couple of years down the road, Pete added to his business a small gas station, out of which he sold minnows that he'd catch in local ponds and streams. The business grew steadily, as did the market for minnows. This encouraged Pete to approach his Uncle, Walter McGehee, to partner with him in starting a minnow farm. As the first person to turn raising minnows into a business enterprise, Wisner Minnow Hatchery Inc., was born and still remains today.

Then the 1960s brought a season of change in the world and the Haring family business. They grew their first batch of catfish fingerlings into a massive 700-acre catfish farm. The growth didn't stop there. The next decade gave rise to the Haring's first processing plant producing a hefty 25,000 pounds of catfish every week. Having been trained by his father, Pete, all his life, Carl quickly picked up the pace to match the increasing market demands. Today, the family processes over 300,000 pounds of fish each week.

By the end of the 1990s, the Haring family opened their Top Water Feed Mill, allowing them to ensure their catfish enjoyed a specially cultivated diet made of high-protein feed. The Harings credit this secret family recipe with giving their farm-raised catfish an excellent flavor.

Today, you'll find the whole school of Harings behind the different operations involved in this family-run business spanning three generations. One being Carl, of course. Also, you will find Carl's younger brother, Sam, at work on the row crops producing deer corn, and older sister, Ellen, managing the fish processing plant. Carl's daughter, Hannah, runs the feed mill and takes point on logistics involving the family's six 18-wheelers and four box trucks, always busy on the roads bringing their delicious catfish to the masses. Finally, there's his niece, Dawn, managing the Human Resources department and inner-office operations.

Carl has been an entrepreneur for as long as he can remember. As a kid, his "on-the-job" training consisted of catching turtles in the minnow ponds and selling them to the locals while following dad, Pete, around to operate the other portions of the business. Carl credits his father for his strong work ethic, as he was involved in all aspects of the daily work from the time he could walk. When asked about one piece of advice he would give his younger self, Carl says, "You've got to enjoy what you're doing. That's the main thing. You have to make money to survive, but you find out what you love and get after it."

The Harings aren't the only ones who love their award-winning catfish, though. The Wisner Catfish Festival is an annual celebration that the Harings are proud to participate in each year. Along with this, they enjoy supporting local community groups and organizations by donating their fried fish and plate-lunches to help these groups raise funds for community initiatives. "Ellen runs the fish frying operation and donates fish plates to help out anyone in a bind," says Carl.

If you go out looking for Carl on a Sunday, though, you'll find him "teaching a man to fish" by leading Sunday School at his local church or various community nursing homes. Giving back to the community is at the heart of Wisner Minnow Hatchery Inc.

The Harings are a close-knit family that understands the importance of making progress in business while maintaining the special qualities that make family-run enterprises unique, much like LUBA.

"We've been very happy with LUBA," says Carl. "Any time we've had a claim, they've stayed on top of it."

Carl mentioned that competitors have approached them from time to time, but because of the excellent service and top-notch attention they receive from LUBA, they've chosen to stay throughout the years. When asked why they decided to stay, even when others offered lower rates, Carl didn't hesitate. "LUBA is the best company we've been with since I've been doing this."

Haring Catfish is the proud recipient of several awards, including the Louisiana Catfish Farmer of the Year, Catfish Farmers of America Award of Excellence, and the Small Business Person of the Year award by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Find out more about this charming family business at www.haringcatfish.com.

CONTEST QUESTION #1

What type of fish does the Haring family raise?