

JULIA BELLE

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senior citizens were uncomfortable or panicky during the mishap, but several were disappointed that the boat trip was cut short.

"Some of them had been on this before, but it was a big disappointment, especially for those who hadn't," he said.

Anderson praised the crew of the Julia Belle for their handling of the situation. He said Trone, who also pilots the vessel, kept passengers informed of the situation over the boat's public-address system.

Just before the steamboat broke down, Anderson said he heard a "loud popping" noise coming from the area of the boat's paddlewheel. He said he was told by crew members that one of the two beams that turn the paddlewheel malfunctioned.

Operating the paddlewheel on half-power might have been dangerous, he said, so the crew just shut the boat down and radioed for help.

As the boat drifted quietly, except for the music intended to keep passengers as entertained as possible, Earl Gudeman and about a dozen other perplexed onlookers watched from shore.

"It doesn't usually come up this way, much less the way it was going," said Gudeman, who was patching the roof on his riverfront home when he heard the music.

Gudeman, who lives in Mossville, said he could not figure out why the boat was so far north — he was unaware of the overnight trips — and why the boat was drifting so close to shore.

"It was just out there. And it wasn't moving. The paddlewheel wasn't turning at all," he said.

The Julia Belle Swain, one of just five river steamboats in the United States, has become a tourist attraction for Peoria and a fixture on the city's riverfront.