

MARINE NEWS

One of the sad indicators of the decline in commercial marine activity on Toronto Harbour in recent years has been the total cessation of grain elevator operations here. One by one, Maple Leaf Mills, Canada Malting and then Victory Soya Mills Ltd. (Central Soya) closed their elevators and milling plants, with Victory's plant at the foot of Parliament Street being the last of them to operate. The Victory silos and plant have stood idle now for more than half a decade, and at last Central Soya has decided to demolish the facility. Crews from the firm of Greenspoon Bros. Ltd. began work late in May, tackling the milling plant first. Work on the reinforced concrete walls of the silos began in mid-August. Unfortunately for anyone frequenting the area near the intersection of Parliament Street and Lakeshore Boulevard, the opening up of the Victory silos released the extremely pungent odour of rotting soybeans for all to "enjoy".

Another recent departure from Toronto Harbour via the efforts of wreckers has been the veteran steam tug SALVAGE PRINCE (C.147612). This 93-foot tug, of 184 Gross Tons, built in 1924 at Selby, England, was for many years operated out of Kingston by the Pyke Towing and Salvage Company, and she became a unit of the combined McAllister-Pyke fleet in the 1960s. She participated in many famous salvage operations, and in the 1960s she worked on many of the scrap tows of older lake vessels moving to overseas breakers. Retired in the late Sixties, she lay at Kingston for a while, and then for many years at Toronto. She spent some time at Brighton, Ontario, but was returned to Toronto two years ago by the Rogers interests. Efforts to sell SALVAGE PRINCE failed, and at present her remains are being cut up in the Toronto Drydock (the Rogers-owned hull of the coaster MENIER CONSOL).

Readers will recall the troubles encountered by the Great Lakes Historical Society in its efforts to preserve the 1925-built steamer WILLIAM G. MATHER, formerly of the fleet of the Cleveland-Cliffs Steamship Company, as a historical display on the Cleveland waterfront. Other interests sought to use the MATHER's mooring area for different purposes and the city authorities seemed not to understand the value of the MATHER as a museum. Unable to secure any permanence to the ship's mooring site, the G.L.H.S. put the MATHER up for disposal, there being no viable alternative. The Society announced recently that, on July 21st, 1995, an agreement was signed for the purchase of WILLIAM G. MATHER from G.L.H.S. by the Harbor Heritage Society. It was reported that the agreement assures that the MATHER "will remain in use as a maritime museum, and possibly a restaurant or other commercial enterprise as well".

A vessel which appears to have eluded the scrappers is the long-idle (over 30 years in ordinary) passenger steamer AQUARAMA, (a) MARINE STAR (55). In July of 1988, the ship, formerly owned by the Sand Products Corp., was towed from Muskegon, Michigan, to Sarnia, Ontario. She had been bought by a consortium which intended to make her into a convention centre at Port Stanley, Ontario, but she never reached that port. Instead, after only a minimum of work was done on her at Sarnia, she was towed down to Windsor, and there she lay for six more years. It was reported in 1994 that AQUARAMA was to be acquired by New Jersey interests and turned into a floating casino, but nothing happened. Instead, it recently was reported that the boat had been sold to Delaware parties, in which former Port Stanley consortium leader James Everatt has a financial interest. On August 1st, TUG MALCOLM, along with a Great Lakes Towing Company tug, departed Windsor with AQUARAMA in tow, bound for Buffalo, New York. There the steamer will lie until she is taken to a drydock for conversion to a casino ship, a refit estimated to cost in between \$30 million and \$50 million. Press reports have not as yet identified the shipyard that will handle this major conversion, nor even indicated whether the massive job will be done on the lakes or at an east coast port.