

man retired from the shipping business in 1978, when he sold the remaining five ships in the fleet to the Quebec & Ontario Transportation Company Ltd., then of St. Catharines.

PARKER EVANS made several trips in Q&O colours under her old name during the 1978 season, but in 1979 she was renamed (d) MARLHILL. The name recalled Marlhill Mines Ltd., an Ontario Paper Company affiliate, which had mined calcium carbonate (used as a filler in wood pulp) at Marlbank, near Belleville, Ontario. Her new colours, under Q&O operation, included a black hull, white forecastle and cabins, and a black smokestack with a broad, white band, trimmed with two narrow blue bands. In the centre of the white band was a stylized blue evergreen tree.

MARLHILL, however, saw only limited service for her new owner. She spent the winter of 1979-1980 at Toronto, with a storage cargo of barley for the Canada Malting Company Ltd., and she was in the process of being fitted out at Toronto for the 1980 season when a crack was discovered in one of her boilers. Repairs were not considered to be economically feasible, and the ship was returned to lay-up status. She was to be given one more load, that being a cargo of soya beans placed in her at the Victory Soya Mills Ltd. elevator at the foot of Parliament Street, Toronto, in November of 1980. Only one month later, however, this cargo was transferred back into the elevator.

During the winter of 1980-1981, it was revealed that MARLHILL had been sold to a new owner, a man named Herman, who resided in New York City. Her Canadian registry actually had been closed during the summer of 1980. MARLHILL soon was sold again, this time through Marine Salvage Ltd., Port Colborne, to Mexican interests. The same Mexican buyers also acquired another retired Q&O steamer, LAC DES ILES, (a) LYMAN C. SMITH (66), (b) MARTHA HINDMAN (79), which had been laid up at Toronto at the close of the 1980 season.

The Mexican buyers were intending to use the two hulls for grain storage at Tampico, Mexico, but the planned location involved height and draft restrictions. Accordingly, the two ships were stripped of their masts, funnels, engines, boilers and forward cabins as they lay in the Turning Basin at Toronto in mid-April of 1981. The after cabins were left in place.

On Wednesday, April 29th, 1981, the tug DANIEL McALLISTER towed MARLHILL out of Toronto, the same tug taking her down the St. Lawrence Seaway and on to Quebec City. DANIEL McALLISTER returned to Toronto on May 4th to pick up LAC DES ILES, which she also towed to Quebec. The deep-sea tug IRVING BIRCH picked up the tow of the two barges at Quebec City, and headed out into the Atlantic Ocean with the former lakers.

Off the east coast of the United States, the tow ran into extremely heavy weather. Old lake steamers en route to overseas scrapyards had proven to be very susceptible to deep-sea storms, and MARLHILL and LAC DES ILES, in their cut-down state, were even more vulnerable. On Saturday, May 30th, MARLHILL sustained damage and, at 7:45 a.m., she sank in a position 145 miles east-southeast of Cape Charles, Virginia, which is located on the north-eastern side of the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. Two days later, LAC DES ILES suffered the same fate 44 miles east of Cape Henry, the point of land marking the south side of the entrance to Chesapeake Bay.

We have spoken with Captain Gordon McNeill, who resides at Owen Sound, and also with T.M.H.S. member Paul Crannie, who wheeled in the PARKER EVANS. They both described the steamer as a strong ship, with excellent handling characteristics.

Be that as it may, this steamer holds a most unusual record, that of being the only Great Lakes ship ever to sink three other vessels by collision and yet not cause the loss of a single life in any of those accidents. She had a long and very eventful career, but there are those who cannot help but wonder whether her fortunes might have been more serene had she been allowed to