

There are times when your Editor is not so happy to fire up the keyboard and get to work on "Scanner", such as when a deadline is looming and we are completely out of ideas for a feature article or for something to fill that last empty page. It is at times such as those that the twenty-nine years we have spent "editing" this publication can weigh heavily on our mind and shoulders.

But there are many other rewarding and happy times when we understand why it is that we continue to do this job. One of the most pleasing of them all comes every year at this time when, with the Christmas Holidays drawing near, your Editor can take advantage of the opportunity to have an informal chat with all of our members via these pages, and to pass along those very special wishes which are exchanged amongst friends at this wonderful time of year. In no other issue of "Scanner" can we spare the space for such sentiments, but because we consider all of the many members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society to be one big and happy family of friends, we make absolutely certain that we have space available in the December issue.

As we write the first draft of these words, it is November 14th. We are looking out on a scene reminiscent of the Armistice Day Storm of November 11, 1940. That storm swept up the Mississippi Valley and engulfed the Great Lakes area with high winds, freezing temperatures and huge snowfalls. That's a bit like what the Toronto area suffered today - record snowfall for the day that was forecast but still caught the area by surprise after a delightful summer and autumn. Fortunately, this storm was not accompanied by the huge loss of ships and crews that the 1940 storm produced, and for that we all should be grateful.

Come to think of it, November 14 wasn't a very nice day back in 1933, either. A storm "of near-blizzard proportions" swept the lakes, sinking the Dominion Tankers tug FLORENCE on Lake Ontario and putting four ships aground elsewhere around the lakes.

The 1997 navigation season saw the thirtieth anniversary of the loss of our last traditional lake overnight passenger boat service, but the sad memory of the departure of SOUTH AMERICAN in 1967 was assuaged by the advent in 1997 of a new lake cruise service operated by the Hapag-Lloyd ship C. COLUMBUS. This new service appears destined to become a permanent feature of Great Lakes summers, and we can only hope that it becomes more accessible to our local ship-fanciers rather than being marketed only on the other side of the Atlantic at prices well beyond our reach.

1997 also marked the 100th anniversary of the construction of two most interesting lake vessels. One was the infamously unsuccessful ship known as Knapp's Roller Boat, which made its appearance on Toronto Bay in the autumn of 1897. The other was a bulk carrier named NIAGARA, built in 1897 by F. W. Wheeler & Company at West Bay City, Michigan. This ship ran for a number of operators over the years, and finished up her operating career in 1982 as a diesel-powered, self-unloading sandsucker owned by the Erie Sand Steamship Company. After having been sold for scrap and almost meeting that fate at Ramey's Bend, she was acquired in 1986 by the City of Erie. But she is still lying at Erie, and it would have been a most happy event if 1997 had seen her restored and open to public inspection.

1997 also saw the 90th anniversary of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway's passenger and freight steamer KEEWATIN. Built on the Clyde in 1907, she served the C.P.R. service from Georgian Bay to the Canadian Lakehead until her retirement at the close of the 1965 season. KEEWATIN and her near-sister ASSINIBOIA were done in by the Canadian version of the same Safety of Life at Sea regulations that killed SOUTH AMERICAN in 1967. KEEWATIN's 90th birthday was duly celebrated in festivities held aboard her at Douglas, Michigan, where she currently serves as a marine museum.