

The summer of 1998 was not the most active on record for shipwatchers to enjoy. While the self-unloaders remained busy, and two more ships of this type were commissioned, the grain business hit the doldrums early in the season and many of the straight-deckers spent most of the summer at the wall. (Some of them never fitted out at all in the spring.) It was well into September before the the grain trade really revived, but eventually all of the bulkers returned to service and worked right through the autumn.

The tanker fleet, such as it was with Socanav now completely gone, was active. We got to see the former Imperial Oil tankers all spiffed up in their new colours as members of the fledgling Algoma Tankers fleet, and they were running into the lakes regularly, as well as serving east coast ports.

The usual flock of warships, both Canadian and U.S., were in the lakes during the 1998 season, showing the flag and promoting recruitment. They visited many ports where the citizenry had the opportunity to tour the vessels. A minor stir was created in late June when the captain of the U.S.S. SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON refused the Canadian pilot's request that the ship fly the Canadian flag as a courtesy while transitting the Welland Canal. A similar request from a Seaway inspector was also rebuffed, although the MORISON did stop at Port Colborne to dump her sewage holding tanks!

There were lots of salt-water ships trading into the lakes, and more of them called at Toronto this year than in any recent year. Most of the incoming cargoes were specialty steel products and sugar, although in the latter part of the season, the sugar cargoes were delivered to the Redpath plant by Paterson lakers.

Lake shipyards remained busy during the season but most of the work was routine repair and inspections. The only yard turning out entirely new ships is Marinette Marine Corp., which remains active in the building of U.S. Coast Guard buoy tenders. The Interlake Steamship Company self-unloading barge PATHFINDER entered service after Bay Shipbuilding completed her conversion from the straight-deck steamer J. L. MAUTHE late last year. Port Weller Dry Docks this summer completed the self-unloader conversion of ALGOWEST and the making of the self-unloader CANADIAN TRANSFER from the stern of CANADIAN EXPLORER and the bow and midbody of HAMILTON TRANSFER. Port Weller is also well along in the construction of the new bow/midbody section for the C.S.L. self-unloader J. W. McGIFFIN, the first of five such "renewals". The new hull section will be joined to the stern of the McGIFFIN over the winter.

The shipbreakers were almost silent this year because there is almost no excess tonnage to scrap. The remains of the venerable sandsucker NIAGARA were broken up at Erie, Pennsylvania, after efforts to preserve the 1897-built ship failed. The stern section of HAMILTON TRANSFER was dismantled at Hamilton before the rest of her hull became part of CANADIAN TRANSFER, and the old bow/midbody of CANADIAN TRANSFER (NORTHERN VENTURE) now lies at Hamilton awaiting an uncertain future. Barge conversion remains a possibility, but scrapping seems the most likely disposition.

There have been a number of accidents this year, including a seemingly never-ending string of incidents with salties in the Seaway, but most, fortunately, have been of a relatively minor nature and no lives were lost. For this, we most certainly can be grateful.

It gives us extreme pleasure to extend our sincere thanks to all who have supported the efforts of the Toronto Marine Historical Society during the 1998 season - the members of the Executive Committee who have attended to the operation of the Society and chaired our entertainment meetings despite a myriad of little (and, sometimes, not so little) problems along the way; the members who are our regular correspondents and contributors to "Scanner" without whose help we could not put out the newsletter at all; those who answered our call for lay-up listings; those who helped deliver "Scanner" in their local areas and thus kept your membership fees down by containing mai-