

It's that time of year again already! Another year has flown by and it falls the duty of your Editor to compose something very personal for the members while he puts off, for the moment, the writing of marine news and features. We have been producing "Scanner" now for 32 years, and this is the 31st time that this Editor has penned a holiday greeting to the readers. Yes, we do crib a lot each Christmas-time from the messages of previous years, but that is only because the words mean so much and because we like to repeat them, just as we never tire of the remarkable music that makes the holiday season so special (although we wish it wouldn't start playing in November!).

Stressed out over finding the right photo greeting to send to your friends who share your marine interest? Prices keep going up, the cards that have the kind of greeting we want just don't seem to be available this year, and why can't we find that photo we set aside in July because we thought it would be so great for our holiday cards? And how about the lineups at the "Snail Mail" Office when we need to buy stamps?

But there is no stress at all involved in passing along the greetings of the season to our members via these pages, and we hope that you don't feel any stress while reading these words. In fact, this is one of your Editor's very most favourite times of year, because we can speak to all of our members right from the heart. In no other "Scanner" issue can we afford the space for such sentiments, but because we consider all of the many members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society to be one big, happy family of friends, we make absolutely certain that we have space available in the December issue. And, dare we admit it? It means that we can write a shorter feature for this issue!

Interestingly, as we write these words, it is the first time in several years that we have not done so during an early blast of winter weather. Yes, the heat of the summer and the relatively benign autumn have given way to wind and cold, and even some early snow in some regions. And your Editor's island garden here at "Gleneagles" finally got blasted by frost last night, but there has been no repetition of the tradition of a major storm in the week of Remembrance Day. We have been very lucky in the weather department.

We thought that the summer of 1998 was beautiful, sunny and warm, but it had nothing on the summer of 1999, which in many areas was the hottest and driest on record. It was wonderful for ship photographers and for those who could escape to "cottage country", but it wasn't so pleasant for those stuck in the big cities. And it was not so nice for lake shipping companies, which saw operating revenues drop along with water levels. Islands appeared where none had been seen in years, and the remains of wrecks appeared along shores where they hadn't been seen in recent memory. Several fleets had ships which suffered serious groundings due, at least in part, to the low water.

It was, however, a good season for cruising the lakes, and the usual selection of small cruise ships visited the lakes again this year. In the "larger category", the German C. COLUMBUS was back for her third year of lake trips and she was joined this year by the upscale French "megayacht" LE LEVANT, and the Norwegian top-of-the-line cruiser SEABOURN PRIDE. But lake cruising remained largely in the domain of the well-to-do and the foreign tourist, whereas in years past, lake passenger steamers provided to so many residents of the Great Lakes area an affordable escape from the heat of the city. It was the Graham & Morton Line on Lake Michigan that called itself "The Dustless Road to Happyland", but it would be difficult to apply such a phrase to the cruise ships entering the lakes these days.

As we near the end of the year, the "Millenium Craze" seems to have taken a grip on everyone. Yes, on January 1st we will have to learn to stop saying "nineteen" and learn how to say "twenty" or "two thousand", and some of us may encounter computer confusion despite our efforts to ensure that all goes smoothly. But remember that the new century does not begin until the year