

On Saturday, January 25th, the newest of the Marinette Marine "Juniper class" buoy tenders for the U.S. Coast Guard was launched. Assisting with the launch into ice-choked water were the tugs ERIKA KOBASIC and KRYSTAL as well as U.S.C.G. MOBILE BAY. The new ship was christened HOLLYHOCK, and she is the first of the new generation of tenders to be designated for service on the Great Lakes. When commissioned next September, she will replace the 1944-built BRAMBLE at Port Huron. Members of the public were unable to enter the Marinette Marine yard to observe the launch as a result of a strike of Marinette workers which began earlier in the week.

The steel industry in the United States does not appear to be quite as moribund as might have appeared only a year or so ago. Two firms which have been operating under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection have been the subject of recent purchase bids. The International Steel Group, which only recently salvaged portions of the former LTV Corp., has submitted a bid of \$1.5 billion to acquire the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. Meanwhile, two firms have submitted bids to acquire the troubled National Steel Corporation. A bid of some \$750 million was put forward by the United States Steel Corporation, but another bid of \$1.025 billion has been made by AK Steel, of Middletown, Ohio. Neither of the bids for National Steel includes its National Steel Pellet Company, which operates a taconite plant at Keewatin, Minnesota, which reportedly is one of the most efficient taconite producing plants in North America.

At about 5:00 a.m. on January 25th, fire broke out aboard LA GRANDE HERMINE, the "replica tall ship" which had been lying, since July 1, 1997, just west of the Beacon Motor Inn at Jordan Harbour. The fire completely destroyed the wooden superstructure of the vessel, and press reports indicated that arson was the suspected cause. The vessel was brought to Jordan Harbour to serve as a restaurant and banquet hall, but soon fell into disuse, and it seems that no one knows who the actual owner was at the time of the fire. The steel hull of the ship was built in 1914 as the ferry LA MARJOLAINE and, under the same name, she later served as a small freighter on the St. Lawrence. The totally phoney-looking wooden superstructure, designed to make the vessel look "something like" boats from the time of Columbus and Cartier, was built upon the steel hull in the early 1990s. Now that she no longer is "the eyesore by the highway", it will be interesting to see what becomes of the hull.

A real tall ship replica, that of HMS DETROIT, which was being built at Amherstburg, Ontario, with considerable federal and local municipal money involved, also has fallen on hard times. The vessel was seized by police before completion as a result of difficulties over payment to Hike Metal Products, of Wheatley, which constructed the hull. It is reported that some \$3.5 million will be needed to complete the project, and the viability of the project is very much in question unless major funds are forthcoming from the various levels of government.

In early January, Great Lakes Transportation LLC announced that it had sold its ship chandlery warehouse at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and also its supply boat OJIBWAY, to MCM Properties LLC, the real estate holding arm of MCM Marine Inc., which operates a drydock facility on a neighbouring site along East Portage Avenue. The Soo supply business was just over one hundred years old, having been formed to supply the ships of the Pittsburgh Steamship Company when that fleet was created in 1901. It supplied the vessels not only of the Pittsburgh fleet, but also of the Interlake Steamship Company, but the decrease in number of vessels operated by those fleets has reduced the demand for the facility in recent years, and Great Lakes Transportation wished to concentrate on the operation of its own Great Lakes Fleet. No firm details have been announced, but MCM indicated that another party might use part of the warehouse site as well as the OJIBWAY.