

of various records has not revealed any evidence that the ship was involved in any other serious accidents until she was caught in one of the worst storms ever to sweep across the waters of Lake Michigan. This disturbance, which has come to be known as the Armistice Day Storm of 1940, began with abnormally calm and warm weather across the Mississippi River valley and the Great Lakes, but conditions changed so quickly that many people as well as ships were caught off guard, and the loss of life and ships was stunning. What follows is the personal record of the experiences of one of NOVADOC's wheelmen, Lloyd H. Belcher, who now resides in Mississauga, Ontario, and who well recalls NOVADOC's appointment with fate on Juniper Beach, near the town of Pentwater, Michigan.

"We cleared Montreal on the 1st of November, light for Chicago, to load sulphite coke for Port Alfred, Quebec. Crossing Lake Ontario and Lake Erie was favourable but when we came to Lake Huron, the winds grew stronger and we were forced to take shelter at Harbor Beach for 36 hours. During that time, the big upper lake boats were able to keep going but some had difficulty in the big seas. After 36 hours, the seas had gone down considerably and we pulled out. After we had been out a short time, we noticed we had company with us (all the rest of the way to Chicago) as three other company boats were with us, namely the CARTIERDOC [a sistership], WELLANDOC and HAMILDOC [both of these being of the Swan, Hunter class delivered to Paterson in 1927]. When we arrived at Chicago, we loaded first and cleared Monday morning [November 11] at three o'clock. As we were going down the narrow channel, we went by the WELLANDOC and they bid us 'Goodbye' and safe journey. As we went by the Coast Guard Station, the Captain [Donald Steip of Wiarton, Ontario] yelled for the weather report but they had none so we went right on out through the breakwater slowly as it was [just] a bit foggy.

"The glass was going down all the time and the wind was from the Southeast but we had no idea that it was going to get as bad as it really did. At noon I was called to go on duty so I went back for a cup of tea before I took the wheel. At that time, the seas were getting bigger and bigger and the wind still came from the Southeast. At one o'clock, the Captain came up and said the glass had gone right to the bottom so we knew that we were in for a storm. We then pulled in for the east shore so we could get the lee of the land. At two o'clock, the wind shifted to the Southwest and blew harder than ever. It was no use trying to make for the west shore as we were too far out in the middle. The waves were getting too big to make the piers at any of the ports on the east side of the lake, so the Captain decided to turn the ship around and let it ride the sea out."

* * *

There, for want of space (there is much more to tell), we must leave the story of the NOVADOC. Join us in the November issue to find out what happened to the hapless NOVADOC and her crew in that storm 63 years ago.

A full list of credits to those who have helped in the preparation of this feature will follow at the end of the article. Meanwhile, with this segment, we present some of the photos we have of NOVADOC. However, she was not a particularly well-photographed canaller, and if any member should happen to have another good image of the ship, we would appreciate the loan of it to present with the final instalment of the feature in the November issue.

* * * * *

DUES REMINDER

Please do not forget to send us your renewal fees for the 2003-2004 season. For details, kindly refer to the front page. We hate to say it, but if you don't re-up now, this is the last "Scanner" you will receive. Our Chief Purser wants to hear from YOU!

* * * * *