

It seems that "The End" finally has been written to the story of the Rochester - Toronto fast ferry service. Forde Reederei Seetouristik GmbH & Co. KG, of Germany, closed on its \$30 million purchase of SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1 in New York City and took ownership of the vessel on April 19. The City of Rochester received its long-awaited funds. FRS, as the new owner commonly is known, took immediate possession of the ferry as she lay at Shelburne, Nova Scotia, and she soon sailed for Germany. She arrived at Bremerhaven on April 27, and there she will be refitted before she enters service between Spain and Morocco across the Strait of Gibraltar in July. We suspect that it will be quite some time before anyone else tries a ferry service across Lake Ontario, but it was fun while it lasted.

More news concerning the port of Rochester at Charlotte concerns the silting problems in the Genesee River which have prevented the cement carrier STEPHEN B. ROMAN from filling up the empty Essroc silos there. With no indication that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will undertake the necessary dredging of the waterway, Essroc decided to activate its barge METIS, which had been lying idle at Toronto, used for storage purposes. The ROMAN put a load of cement into METIS and, in tow of the tug EVANS McKEIL, she arrived safely at Charlotte on April 29. She unloaded and then set out for Picton. She since has brought several more loads to Charlotte and apparently will continue to do so until the silos are full.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been in the news recently for something other than the non-funding of essential dredging projects. During the winter, Michigan Congressman (D) Bart Stupak made very pointed comments to the effect that the Corps appeared to be planning to kill the project to construct a second Poe-sized lock at the Soo to replace the Davis and Sabin Locks. The new lock project was first approved by Congress in 1986, but funding never has been authorized. Then, in mid-April, Congress did pass a \$15 billion water projects bill which included a provision ordering the Corps of Engineers to build the lock. But, strangely, separate legislation is needed to authorize funding of the project. The Senate must also pass such legislation and it must receive presidential approval. So, for all intents and purposes, it seems we are no closer to getting a new lock than before.

And speaking of the U.S. House of Representatives, it must pass an extension to the current exemption of the 80-year-old, wooden-cabined river sternwheeler DELTA QUEEN from Safety of Life at Sea legislation, or else 2008 will be her last year of service. Here we go again! Since the first exemption was signed into law by President Richard Nixon, extensions have been granted fairly easily. This time, however, there is a kink. The Delta Queen Steamboat Company was taken over last year by the Majestic America Line, which is part of Ambassadors International. Since the takeover, the former DQ vessels, together with others in the current fleet, are no longer union-crewed. And the unions that used to man the boats have notified the company that they will be opposing the exemption. President of Majestic America, David Giersdorf, has stated that the company is "aggressively pursuing an extension" to the exemption. DELTA QUEEN is the very last of the truly vintage overnight passenger steamers operating in North America, and it would be a total shame if she were to be lost over something like this. We hope that sanity will prevail.

There have been significant developments concerning the 1976-built passenger and auto ferry NINDAWAYMA, (a) MONTE CRUCETA (76), (b) MONTE CASTILLO (78), (c) MANX VIKING (87), (d) MANX (88), (e) SKUDENES (89), (f) ONTARIO NO. 1 (89). She ran for a few years for the Owen Sound Transportation Co. Ltd. on the Manitoulin Island ferry service, but last operated in 1992. She lay idle at Owen Sound for ten years and then was taken to Montreal by Verreault Navigation Inc., but this firm never ran her. In the spring of 2007, NINDAWAYMA (C.359765) was acquired by the Upper Lakes Group Inc., Toronto. Towed by COMMODORE STRAITS, assisted by RADIUM YELLOWKNIFE and OURS POLAIRE, NINDAWAYMA entered the Seaway on April 21. A number of delays were encountered due to other traffic and the manoeuvrability of the tow. She finally was made fast at the shipyard at Port Weller on the morning of April 26. There Upper Lakes will remove the ferry's engines and certain other equipment. The company stated it was not certain what would be done with the vessel afterward, but that she either would be scrapped or else cut down to a deck barge. Rumours have been running rampant ever since, and it will interesting to see where the equipment and the hull wind up.

Meanwhile, the regular Manitoulin Island ferry, CHI-CHEEMAUN, returned to service after the completion of the second instalment of her major mid-life refurbishment. For the second year in a row, the 1974-built ferry wintered at Sarnia where Shelley Machine and Marine did the largest part of the work on her, including the replacement of her two original