

A labour dispute beginning on May 10 sent the three Wisconsin & Michigan Steamship Company "river class" sisterships WOLVERINE, EARL W. and DAVID Z. into lay-up in the North Slip at Sarnia. The strike was related to the acquisition of the vessels from the former Oglebay Norton fleet by an affiliate of the Lower Lakes Towing / Grand River Navigation organization. The vessels remained idle for most of the summer, but WOLVERINE, the only one so far repainted with the grey Lower Lakes hull, was back in service late in August. The other two may well see service during the autumn season.

After so very many years of idleness at various lake ports, the passenger steamer MARINE STAR / AQUARAMA departed Buffalo on July 15, bound down the Seaway. After a delay caused by silting that hampered the efforts of the tugs to get her away from her berth, the vessel left for Port Colborne. She was handled by the tugs COMMODORE STRAITS, RADIUM YELLOWKNIFE and M. R. KANE. After a lay-over at Trois Rivieres, she departed on August 4 in tow of the Greek tug AETOS Z. All sorts of destinations were rumoured for the ship, but in the end, she was headed to Alang, India, for scrapping. Many of the press reports spoke of AQUARAMA as having been a "luxury lake liner", but in fact she had been anything but that. She had been rebuilt for lake service according to plans from George G. Sharpe & Company, which had designed the conversion of JUNIATA into MILWAUKEE CLIPPER. If only AQUARAMA had been so successful. She was starkly modern and barren on the inside, stunningly ugly on the outside, was outrageously difficult to handle, especially in any kind of wind, and ate fuel like it was going out of style. She only ran from 1956 to 1962 and proved to be totally unsuitable for the Detroit - Cleveland day run. After 45 years of idleness, she finally is gone from the lakes and there are few who will grieve over her departure. She was a ship that had no business being here at all.

When MARINE STAR / AQUARAMA was lying at Trois Rivieres, she was rafted outboard of the former laker CANADIAN MARINER, which had been used there as a grain storage barge since her retirement as an active laker. But those who noted that, this summer, her name had been painted out as well as her stack diamonds, feared for her future. The vessel, built in 1963, and which served previously as (a) NEWBRUNSWICKER (68), (b) GRANDE HERMINE (72), was towed from Trois Rivieres on August 16 by the tug HELLAS, with the Groupe Ocean tug AVANTAGE assistig as far as Les Escoumins. By the time of this report, the final destination of the tow had not been revealed, but a scrapyard at Alang, India, seemed likely.

Another vessel that has reached the end of her life is the former Halco canal tanker CAPE TRANSPORT, (a) NORTHCLIFFE HALL (i)(61). Built in 1947, she had been converted to a tanker in 1957. She was sold for off-lakes use in 1977 and was cut down to a barge, but she never left fresh water. She eventually wound up being used as a dock at the General Chemical plant at Amherstburg. However, that plant is now closed and the old tanker was no longer needed. On August 16, the tug VIGILANT 1 took the barge in tow and moved her to the Dean Construction slip at La Salle where she apparently will be broken up. This is the same location where the hull of the barge (and former passenger steamer) ALABAMA recently was dismantled.

On July 30, the Algoma Central Corporation announced that Algoma Tankers Limited had exercised an option to acquire a second double-hulled tanker from the MedMarine Group. The purchase of the first of the pair had been announced on June 15. Both vessels are currently under construction at the Eregli Shipyard in Turkey, and each ship will cost Algoma approximately \$42 million. Both vessels will be in service by early 2008. No names for the ships have yet been announced.

In the May issue, we noted that the Essroc barge METIS had been pressed in service, in tow of EVANS MCKEIL, to haul cement from Picton to Rochester. This was necessary because silting in the Genesee River had prevented Essroc's STEPHEN B. ROMAN from trading into the river. METIS has remained in service all summer (except for a short bit of shipyard time at Hamilton). However, it was announced in late July that \$1.6 million in funding had been secured by the House of Representatives for the U.S. Corps of Engineers. If the matter passes in the Senate, and if the President signs it (big "ifs"), the work could begin in 2008, but that means that METIS will have to handle the Rochester cement run well into next year. The Corps last dredged the Genesee in 2004 but very extensive silting has occurred in the interim. Meanwhile, other U.S. lake ports have been crying the dredging blues especially with the current low water levels, but funds simply are not available. Several minor groundings have been reported.