

Nothing Could Be Finer Than Working on the MINER**- by Capt. Gerry Ouderkirk, with The Editor -**

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of Upper Lakes Shipping Ltd., Toronto, and to honour the company and its major contribution to Great Lakes history, we have chosen one of the landmark vessels of its fleet for this issue's feature. She also is one of the more contemporary ships we ever have featured, despite the fact that she has been gone from the lakes for more years than we care to realize!

Billed as "the largest ocean-going self-unloading freighter ever built on the Great Lakes", CAPE BRETON MINER was the first self-unloader built for the company. She was built by ULS' subsidiary company, Port Weller Dry Docks Ltd., as its Hull 35. The vessel was ordered by ULS after it obtained a contract to transport 2,850,000 tons of Dominion Coal Company Ltd. coal from Sydney, Nova Scotia, to the Lakeview and Richard L. Hearn power generating stations at Toronto, for the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission. It was estimated that the return trip between Sydney and Toronto would take nine or ten days.

In addition to being equipped for service on the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Great Lakes, the MINER was capable of world-wide operation as a carrier of bulk commodities such as coal, iron ore pellets, grain, stone, phosphate, gypsum and salt. The MINER carried a crew of 31, and she had passenger accommodations for eight.

The MINER featured many technological first on the Great Lakes, among which was the first completely automatic, fully transistorized, computer-operated boiler room. With her 75 foot (22.86m) beam, the MINER also set the pattern for large ocean-type bulk carriers operating through the Seaway, as 75 feet was the maximum permissible beam through the locks at that time. She was 680 feet (207.26m) in overall length, including her bulbous bow, this bow being a first for Upper Lakes Shipping. Her moulded depth was 43'9" (13.33m), which gave her a cargo carrying capacity of 960,692 cu. ft. (27,203 m3) with a summer draft of 30'3.63" (9.236m). The MINER had seven holds and 20 hatches. Her registered gross tonnage was 18809, while her net tonnage was 11547. Most of her steel hull was welded, but apparently she was riveted at the deck strake, inside the side tanks.

A 9,900 horsepower steam engine built by Canadian General Electric Co. gave the MINER a top speed of 15.5 knots and a service speed of 14.5 knots. Her hull design allowed her to lift more cargo at shallow draft than previously built vessels. The largest vessel hauling coal through the Seaway before her carried 19,000 tons. The MINER packed in 21,000 tons, which she could discharge at the rate of 2,400 tons an hour. Using three conveyor belts, cargo was dumped onto a transfer belt which in turn deposited it into a bucket-style trunk elevator (later converted to a loop-belt system) which lifted the cargo out of the hold and dropped it onto the 250 foot (76.2m) long boom belt, which conveyed the cargo to the dock.

As well, the MINER had an 800 horsepower bow thruster to assist with docking, which greatly reduced the need for tug assists when berthing. The MINER also had six remote controlled, constant-tension electric mooring winches, each of which carried 600 feet of steel wire on a dedicated drum, used for locking and docking.

In due course, the vessel was floated out of the dry dock and she was completed at the fit-out wall. She was christened on Saturday, April 25, 1964, her sponsor being Mrs. John Robarts, wife of Ontario's then premier. Mrs. John D. Leitch, wife of the owner, also was present and, suitably, she wore a Breton sailor's hat for the occasion. Tours on board the new vessel were arranged before the ceremony began. An hour later, the crowd assembled by the official party marquee to witness, at 11 a.m., as Mrs. Robarts tossed a beribboned bottle of champagne at the bow and called out the new name, followed by cheers from the 1,500 guests and drydock employees and whistle blasts from ships in the vicinity. Hilda Jean Leitch presented Mrs. Robarts with a bouquet of roses from her family, and Mrs. Robarts gave Mr. and Mrs. Leitch's daughter a bracelet.

John D. Leitch had served aboard H.M.C.S. CAPE BRETON during World War II, and he placed a plaque from that frigate aboard the MINER upon her christening.

After the ceremonies, the guests went to Prudhomme's Garden Centre in nearby Vineland, where the ballroom and dining room had been prepared to wine and dine Mr. Leitch's luncheon guests, amongst whom were provincial and local politicians and ULS business associates. Meanwhile, back at Port Weller, work began immediately on a larger near-sistership, which