

One of the best pieces of news we have heard in many moons came in the first week of April when Central Marine Logistics Inc., of Griffith, Indiana, announced that in addition to EDWARD L. RYERSON, WILFRED SYKES and JOSEPH L. BLOCK, it was taking over as managing operator of the venerable cement-carrying steamer ST. MARYS CHALLENGER. The 1906 built CHALLENGER, (a) WILLIAM P. SNYDER (26), (b) ELTON HOYT II (52), (c) ALEX D. CHISHOLM (66), (d) MEDUSA CHALLENGER (99), (e) SOUTHDOWN CHALLENGER (04), is owned by St. Marys Cement Inc. and previously was managed by HMC Ship Management Ltd., of Lemont, Illinois, an affiliate of the Hannah Marine Corp. The CHALLENGER, oldest freighter still in active self-propelled service on the Great Lakes, is powered by a Skinner Unaflo steam engine which was placed in her in 1950 when the Interlake Steamship Company was running her. In recent years, there had been frequent rumours to the effect that the CHALLENGER was going to be cut down to a barge, but it would seem that C.M.L. has no such plans and is proud to be the manager of such an historic and handsome steamer. We hope she will run for many years to come. The CHALLENGER began her 2008 season by sailing from South Chicago during the first week of May.

It was announced late in April that Canada Steamship Lines had reached an agreement to acquire four 730-foot, 1980-1981 built vessels from Fednav Ltd., Montreal, the ships to be delivered between December 2008 and December 2009, and all to be reflagged Canadian. The ships are LAKE ERIE, (a) FEDERAL OTTAWA (95); LAKE MICHIGAN, (a) FEDERAL MAAS (i)(95); LAKE ONTARIO, (a) FEDERAL DANUBE (95), and LAKE SUPERIOR, (a) FEDERAL THAMES (95). No renames have been mentioned. It is intended that LAKE ONTARIO and LAKE SUPERIOR will be dedicated commencing in 2010 to carrying ilmenite ore from Havre St-Pierre to Sorel, while the other two will be used in domestic trades.

In the April issue, we noted that Algoma Central Corporation had acquired three 729-foot vessels from Viken Shipping AS, of Norway, these vessels also having been part of the Fednav fleet, although under charter only. The three will be under Seaway Marine Transport management once their Fednav charters expire. The are SANDVIKEN, DAVIKEN and GOVIKEN. It has been suggested that SANDVIKEN may become (c) ALGOMA SPIRIT, and DAVIKEN may be (c) ALGOMA DESTINY, while no new name has been heard for GOVIKEN yet.

Also in the April issue, we mentioned the various developments within the Lower Lakes Towing and Grand River Navigation fleet. One of those was the acquisition of VOYAGEUR INDEPENDENT and VOYAGEUR PIONEER by Lower Lakes, with the INDEPENDENT to become (e) OJIBWAY and VOYAGEUR to be named (d) KAMINISTIQUA. But although the OJIBWAY renaming happened as planned, the other renaming did not. For reasons that remain unclear, VOYAGEUR was re-registered on February 29, 2008, at Nanticoke as (d) KAMINISTIQUA - without the fourth 'i', and that is the way the name was painted on the ship. Since the ship is named for the river at Thunder Bay, whose name is spelled Kaministiquia, the vessel's registered name seems most unusual.

Readers will recall that, back on January 14, the American Steamship Company's 1,000-footer WALTER J. McCARTHY JR., (a) BELLE RIVER (90), sustained bottom damage when she struck an underwater obstruction while backing into winter lay-up quarters at the Hallett No. 8 wharf in Superior, Wisconsin. The ship began to take water but watertight doors confined the water to the engineroom area. Although the McCARTHY settled by the stern, the water was removed as soon as possible and work on the refurbishing of machinery exposed to the water began. It had been feared that the McCARTHY might be out of service until mid-summer, creating a shortage of available tonnage for the A.S.C. fleet, but hull and engine repairs were accomplished faster than expected. Barring any problems arising during trials, the McCARTHY was expected to be ready to load a cargo of coal for Nanticoke on May 6.

Contact with submerged and obstructive objects is not unheard of, but usually occurs only rarely. The McCARTHY is not the only recent lake victim, however. On April 21, the Interlake Transportation Inc. barge PATHFINDER, powered by the tug DOROTHY ANN, was manoeuvring at Marquette, Michigan, after unloading a cargo of stone and preparing to load iron ore. The tug unexpectedly made contact with a submerged object which later was found to be a rudder lost at some previous time by another ship. The impact tore one of the tug's 20-ton Z-drive propulsion units right off her hull and caused a minor oil spill. The harbour was virtually closed while divers located and recovered both the old rudder and the Z-drive, but on April 24 DOROTHY ANN and PATHFINDER were able to get underway for the Rouge with the ore cargo, despite being short one drive unit. The tug will eventually have to be drydocked for replacement of the lost unit.