

Ever since the December 4, 1989, grounding of the U.S. Coast Guard buoy tender MESQUITE on rocks off Keweenaw Point, there has been uncertainty about what would become of the vessel, which was decommissioned as a total loss. At first, it appeared that the tender would be refloated come spring and her remains sold for scrapping. Several interested groups, however, argued that MESQUITE should be sunk as part of an underwater park, and various sites were suggested for this. On March 30, however, it was announced that the Coast Guard now plans to free MESQUITE and then sink her in some 100 feet of water in the area of the proposed Keweenaw Peninsula Underwater Preserve. Supporters of that project were ecstatic over the announcement. Meanwhile, there will be official enquiries concerning the loss of MESQUITE. Vice Admiral Howard Thorsen will conduct an investigation into the actions of the ship's commanding officer, Lt. Cmdr. John Lynch, by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which will decide if a court martial is warranted. Meanwhile, Rear Admiral Richard Applebaum, of the Ninth Coast Guard District, Cleveland, is to conduct disciplinary proceedings against Ensign Susan Subocz, who was piloting MESQUITE when she grounded (the commander allegedly having gone below for a cup of tea), and against Chief Warrant Officer James Thanasiu, the engineering officer who should have been in charge of damage control but who instead is said to have been overcome by an attack of panic.

By the time these words appear in print, the fate of the venerable passenger steamer MILWAUKEE CLIPPER (unofficially known in recent years as CLIPPER) may be known. A court has ordered that the vessel be sold at public auction on May 2nd at Chicago. The order stems from foreclosure action brought by one of the ship's many creditors, and liens against MILWAUKEE CLIPPER are said to amount to more than a half million dollars.

The spring began as a very busy season for the veteran McKeil sandsucker NIA-GARA II, (a) RIDEAULITE (47), (b) IMPERIAL LACHINE (I)(54), (c) NIAGARA (69), (d) W. M. EDINGTON (84). She got off to an early start and made a number of trips from the Niagara Bar to Port Weller and Hamilton with sand. However, her good fortune came to an end during the morning of Thursday, April 12th, when she managed to hole herself by running over her own anchor whilst digging sand on the Bar. Knowing that the vessel was in trouble, the crew headed her in and she settled to the bottom about three hundred feet offshore near the mouth of the Niagara River. When NIAGARA II came to rest, the water was over her spar deck and her engine room was flooded. McKeil work crews came quickly to the scene with tugs and a barge, and unloaded 1,000 tons of sand from the ship, as well as a quantity of bunker oil. Fortunately, the weather remained calm through the salvage operation and NIAGARA II was refloated on Saturday, April 14. That afternoon, she was towed to Port Weller where she was immediately placed on drydock. She subsequently was moved over into the graving dock to allow BEECHGLEN to use the main drydock. It is said that NIA-GARA II sustained severe damage, particularly to her machinery, and there are unconfirmed reports to the effect that she may have her propulsion machinery removed, henceforth to be operated as a barge. Only time will tell what lies in store for this 60-year-old boat, which originally was built as a tanker for Imperial Oil service on the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers. She was converted to a self-unloading sandsucker in 1954, and her original steam engine, which was removed in 1972, rests to this day on display in a glass enclosure in front of the Marine Museum of Upper Canada at Toronto.

At the end of 1989, doubt was expressed concerning the future of the USS Great Lakes Fleet Inc. self-unloading steamer IRVIN L. CLYMER, (a) CARL D. BRADLEY (I)(27), (b) JOHN G. MUNSON (I)(51). The oldest ship remaining in the U.S. Steel fleet, she was built at Lorain in 1917. The company had said that no decision on CLYMER's future would be made until 1990 tonnage requirements could be assessed, and we are pleased to see that she now has been fitted out and is in service. Those who have seen her have remarked that she looks splendid in the new U.S. Steel paint scheme, and that the livery appears to suit her the best of all of the fleet's ships!