

MARINE NEWS

Our October issue carried an extensive report on the loss by explosion and fire of the Cleveland Tankers Inc. motortanker JUPITER, which had been unloading gasoline at the Bay City, Michigan, terminal of Total Petroleum. As official enquiries into this, one of the worst shipping accidents on the lakes in many years, attempted to determine the causes of the fire, lawsuits arising from the tragedy have been flying in all directions. One action commenced against both Cleveland Tankers and the American Steamship Company (owner of the self-unloader BUFFALO, which passed by JUPITER just before the fire broke out) names as plaintiffs the seventeen surviving crewmembers of the tanker, and seeks \$20 million in damages. Reference has been made to a letter sent in 1984 to the tanker's owners by the vessel's chief engineer, in which he complained of the state of JUPITER's firefighting equipment, and it is alleged that no improvement had been made before the fire. Incidentally, although we knew that the shore unloading connection had broken when JUPITER parted her moorings (and/or the dock pilings gave way), we should add to our earlier report the fact that the fire actually was triggered when the spewing gasoline was ignited by arcing which resulted when the tanker's shore power line was pulled taut and then snapped.

The fighting of the fires aboard JUPITER was done (with the assistance of U.S.C.G. BRAMBLE) by a crew from Williams Boots & Coots Firefighters and Hazard Control Specialists from Port Neches, Texas. The firm of Titan Maritime Industries Inc., of Florida, was brought to the scene, after the fires were extinguished, to begin the salvage operation by removing the remaining 15,000 or so gallons of gasoline from the ship, and notably from her sternmost cargo tank which was not involved in the fire. JUPITER was an obvious total loss, despite the fact that her machinery and accommodation spaces were not burned. It was suggested that her broken hull might best be broken up at the nearby site of the old Defoe Shipbuilding Company yard at Bay City. Despite environmental concerns that threatened to end this plan and force the movement of the wreck farther from the accident scene, JUPITER was moved to the former shipyard site once she was refloated, and the scrapping of the ship had begun by the second half of the month of October.

Another regrettable autumn marine casualty occurred at 1:20 p.m. on Monday, October 1st, when the tug BARBARA LYN sank in some 200 feet of water in Lake Huron, off Huron City, near the tip of the Michigan Thumb. The tug, owned by the Ryba Marine Construction Company, of Cheboygan, Michigan, was on a trip from Monroe to Alpena, and was hauling two barges loaded with dredging equipment. In heavy weather, the tug apparently was struck by a very large wave which capsized her. Three of the tug's crew managed to swim to the barges, from which they later were rescued, but her captain, Joseph Ross, 41, of Cheboygan, was swept away from the barges and died of exposure. The tug sank so quickly that no distress message could be sent by radio, but Coast Guardsmen were alerted by an automatic signal whose transmissions were triggered by the sinking. The TUG MALCOLM was dispatched to collect the barges and complete their trip to Alpena. BARBARA LYN (U.S.276723), (a) SUMTER (83), was an experimental, aluminum-hulled tug that was built in 1958 at Bayou La Batre, Louisiana, by Elmo Horton at Bryant Boats Inc. She was 51.2 x 17.0 x 6.5, 51 Gross Tons, and she came to the Great Lakes in 1983.

On October 18, 1990, the P & H Shipping steamer WILLOWGLEN, (a) LEHIGH (III) (81), (b) JOSEPH X. ROBERT (82), suffered damage to her port bow when, whilst upbound with a cargo of cement, she was caught by a gust of wind and was blown against the breakwater on the U.S. side of the Huron Cut, in the St. Clair River, below the Blue Water Bridge. The vessel was able to proceed on her way after damage inspection, but the impact caused damage to some 75 feet of the breakwall.