

As mentioned previously in the pages of "Scanner", the winter of 1993-1994 has been one of the most severe winters on the Great Lakes in recent memory. Abnormally frigid weather set in about Christmas-time, after a warm but wet autumn, and many areas had very little snow cover when the cold weather arrived. The below-normal temperatures lasted well into February, and as a consequence, Lakes Superior, Huron and Erie were almost completely ice-covered, while even Lake Ontario had 30 percent ice cover. The very heavy ice conditions stopped all but a very few winter vessel operations on the lakes, and it seems unlikely that much shipping will be possible until mid-April. Even at that, some very strenuous ice-breaking operations will need to be performed by the U.S. and Canadian Coast Guards. C.C.G.S. SAMUEL RISLEY and GRIFFON were kept busy on the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers throughout the winter, and U.S.C.G. MACKINAW was sent up into Lake Superior in advance of the planned March 25 opening of the St. Mary's Falls Canal in an attempt to open a shipping track through Whitefish Bay and the upper St. Mary's River, while icebreaking in the upper and lower Soo harbours was done by the tug W. J. IVAN PURVIS on March 25th.

The first commercial passage of the Soo Locks for the season did not come until just before noon on March 27th, when ARTHUR M. ANDERSON passed downbound. She was followed at mid-afternoon by EDGAR B. SPEER, while the first upbound passage was made by EDWIN H. GOTT after the SPEER cleared the Poe Lock. At last report, the Welland Canal was not scheduled to open until Tuesday, April 5th, and as we went to press with this issue, there was very little sign of marine life around Toronto Harbour, even the cement carriers ENGLISH RIVER and STEPHEN B. ROMAN remaining at their piers.

In previous issues, we have commented upon plans for a Great Lakes cruise service to be operated during the summer of 1994 by Marine Expeditions, an affiliate of Blyth & Company Travel Limited, Toronto, using the Russian ship AKADEMIK IOFFE. (Incidentally, the ship was built in 1988-1989, and not in 1987 as we had reported.) In any event, "The Toronto Star" reported on March 22nd that a group of tour passengers, including a dozen Canadians, had a rather unsettling experience on an AKADEMIK IOFFE cruise bound for Antarctica. The report indicated that, on March 17th, the passengers were stranded in the Falkland Islands as a result of AKADEMIK IOFFE being seized over an account owed to a German shipyard. The passengers were still marooned in the Falklands on the 22nd, but were scheduled to be flown out that day via Punta Arenas and Buenos Aires on the long journey home.

Meanwhile, other plans for cruise services on the lakes in 1994 have been mentioned, including one by Blount Marine's American Canadian Caribbean Line, which would travel portions of the New York State Barge Canal, and pass up the lakes as far as Chicago.

During the late winter, cutting torches began to work on the dilapidated remains of the former east coast carferry PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND as she lay along the south wall of Toronto's Ship Channel, west of the Richard L. Hearn generating station. By the end of March, the aft section of the superstructure had been removed down to the main deck. It was not immediately evident whether the work was the beginning of the scrapping of the venerable vessel, or whether she was being prepared for some other use. When PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND was brought to Toronto in 1992, it was suggested that certain parties were thinking of turning the ship into a floating aquarium! The 1993 Canadian List of Ships recorded PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND's owner as 447870 Ontario Limited, of R.R. 1, Whitby, Ontario.

The winter was not a good one for a former Toronto party boat. The 59-foot, 1954-built VULCAN II operated on Toronto Bay, but was sold some time ago to a Waterloo couple who were intending to use her as a yacht-home. VULCAN II sank in Hamilton Harbour during a storm on February 24th, and remained on the bottom until lifted to the surface on March 2nd by a McKeil Marine Ltd. salvage crew.