

It was back in July of 1988 that the passenger steamer AQUARAMA, (a) MARINE STAR (55), was towed away from her berth at Muskegon, Michigan, where she had been lying idle for 25 long years. The ship, which was built back in 1945 at Chester, Pennsylvania, and rebuilt into a day passenger boat for lake service during 1955-1956, was towed to Sarnia, where she remained through the summer of 1988. She later was taken to Windsor, and has been lying there ever since. Plans to take her to Port Stanley, Ontario, for use as a convention facility never materialized. It recently was supposed that something was "in the works" for AQUARAMA, however, because her name was painted out, and her original name, MARINE STAR, was painted back on her hull, although we do not believe that she was officially renamed.

Then, on September 28, 1994, the Executive News Service carried the following Reuter report, which originated that same day in Atlantic City, New Jersey: "Gamma International Ltd. said it activated a plan to retrofit and refurbish the MARINE STAR, also known as the S.S. AQUARAMA, a 520-foot United States flagged vessel. The company said the action was in light of the recent federal legislative change clarifying the definition of 'gambling ship', which allows casino gambling under certain circumstances on United States flagged vessels. Planned and designed to be a total entertainment cruise ship, the 250,000-square foot vessel would contain about 50,250 square feet of casino space. It would also include 71 table games and 1,600 slot machines. The ship would accommodate up to 3,500 passengers. In addition, the completed vessel would offer three restaurants totalling 880 seats, plus four beverage outlets. The company said it is exploring the feasibility of various ports for the ship in the East and Southeast, although no final determination as to location has been made. Gamma has a management contract on the ship's operation, for a term equivalent to the term of debt financing arranged by the company, which entitles Gamma to a fee of 10 percent of earnings before interest, taxes and depreciation."

It remains to be seen whether anything more will ever come of these plans than of the Port Stanley scheme. The introduction of gambling to locations both ashore and afloat has been the subject of much argument throughout the United States and Canada in recent years, with municipalities often supporting the schemes until they find out that people visiting casinos usually spend all their money gambling, and not on goods and services available in the outside community. Certain sections of the Mississippi River have seen the arrival of numerous gambling boats in the last several years, but already some of them have given up and moved on, their ability to draw crowds (and money) waning once the novelty of the situation wears off, and the locals run out of money to spend on the slots and the tables.

The largest cargo ever loaded out of Stoneport, Michigan, during the 37 years of operation there by the Presque Isle Corporation was carried out on July 12, 1994, by (appropriately enough) the Litton Great Lakes Corporation's tug-barge combination PRESQUE ISLE. The load of 50,854 net tons of kiln limestone was bound for the Marblehead Lime Company plant at Buffington, Indiana.

In its efforts to dispose of all remnants of the defunct Boblo Island amusement park, the Northern Capital Corp. has managed to find buyers for three of the Island's six ferries. GIBALTAR has been acquired by parties in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, for operation on the Clinton River, while FRIENDSHIP was bought by the Portofino Restaurant of Wyandotte. TECUMSEH has been purchased by interests in Key West, Florida. This leaves only the L. R. BEATTIE as well as the Canadian PAPOOSE III and PAPOOSE IV still unsold, according to a Windsor press report of August 11th. Most of the park's other assets have been sold, all 30 of the rides having gone to amusement parks around the world, and the Island itself, along with two mainland properties, was sold to a Malden Township resident, John Oram, for a reported \$2.5 million U.S., apparently for redevelopment purposes.