

Very much a surprise to shipping observers and boat riders alike is the fact that the fleet of St. Lawrence Cruise Lines Inc. was reduced from two ships to one just before the closing of the Seaway for the 1992 navigation season. Unfortunately, VICTORIAN EMPRESS will not be running in the lakes during 1993. Her operators, of course, had been in the process of eventually bringing her under Canadian ownership and registry, but it would appear that federal regulations and "officialdom" combined to make the project an exercise in frustration. Accordingly, the decision was made to dispose of the U.S.-flag ship, and the appropriate deal came together on December 15th. Having sailed down the Seaway on the 14th, she cleared Montreal on the 20th with the name VICTORIAN EMPRESS still painted on her bows, while the new name (d) SPIRIT OF 98 and the registry port of Juneau, Alaska, were painted on a board hung over the stern. She arrived at Halifax on December 24th for a short Christmas layover and a respite from nasty weather. She sailed again on the 27th, bound for yet another transit of the Panama Canal, and an eventual destination of Seattle. Interestingly (in that St. Lawrence Cruise Lines acquired her from Alaskan waters), she is to be operated on a service between Seattle and Juneau by Alaska Sightseeing/Cruise West, as a sixth boat in its fleet. The former (a) PILGRIM BELLE, (b) COLONIAL EXPLORER, served her lake operators well, carrying over 6,000 passengers for them. The Canadian-registered CANADIAN EMPRESS will carry on alone in 1993, featuring a revised schedule on the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers.

Socanav Inc. disposed of another of its tankers just before the end of 1992. On December 3rd, LE CEDRE, (a) W. HAROLD REA (70), (b) EASTERN SHELL (II) (91), cleared Sorel, Quebec, under her new name, (d) COLON TRADER, bound for Panama. The official name of her new owner is Marine Sales & Services Ltd., of Road Town, Tortola, B.W.I., but the ship is being managed from a Panamanian address. The motortanker was built in 1962 as Hull 176 of Collingwood Shipyards, 335.0 x 46.0 x 24.6, 4009 Gross and 2961 Net. She was built for Canadian Oil Companies Ltd., Toronto, which marketed gasoline under the famous "White Rose" sign. That company was acquired by Shell Canada Ltd. in 1963 and, in 1987, the entire Shell Canada tanker fleet was long-term chartered to Socanav Inc. COLON TRADER passed Halifax on her delivery voyage to Panama on December 6, 1992.

On January 22, the court at Simcoe, Ontario, handed down its judgment in the case of charges against the master and third officer of the Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker GRIFFON which were laid as a result of the March 18, 1991, collision in which GRIFFON sank the fishtug CAPTAIN K. and killed her three crewmen in the process. Third Officer William Bennett was acquitted on all six charges. Capt. Gordon Stogdale was acquitted on three charges of criminal negligence causing death, but was found guilty on three counts of dangerous operation of a vessel causing death. Sentence will be pronounced against Stogdale at a later sitting of the court.

It has been confirmed that the former Lake Superior railferry INCAN SUPERIOR which sailed out of the lakes in late November, arrived safely at Vancouver, British Columbia, on January 2, 1993. It is said that INCAN SUPERIOR will winter at Vancouver, and in the spring will be placed on a railferry service between Vancouver and Nanaimo, B.C., on Vancouver Island. INCAN SUPERIOR was built on the west coast in 1974, and when she was withdrawn from her Lake Superior service, she had just completed her 2,386th trip between the Canadian and United States Lakeheads.

One of the ships spending the current winter at Sarnia (she is moored at the Government Wharf) is the Algoma Central Corporation's 1970-built self-unloader AGAWA CANYON. During the winter, the CANYON will receive some \$800,000 in repairs to her unloading equipment, her cargo holds and her main machinery. Local contractors are doing some of the work, but most of it is being handled by Fraser Ship Repairs, Algoma's own Port Colborne marine repair affiliate.