

Every year at this time, with the Christmas Holidays drawing near, your Editor is happy to be able to take the opportunity to have an informal chat with all of our members in these pages, and to pass along those very special wishes which are exchanged amongst friends at this wonderful time of year. In no other issue of "Scanner" can we spare the space for these ramblings, but because we consider all of the many members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society to be one big happy family of friends, we make absolutely certain that we have space available in the December issue.

We have here a chance to look back on the year that we have just survived (as it were), and to make a few very subjective comments on the various developments of importance that have taken place on the marine scene since last we chatted. As difficult as it is for us to believe it, this is the twenty-seventh time that your Editor has penned such holiday season thoughts for you, our readers. We hope that you feel the same importance of this moment that we are experiencing.

This has been a momentous year on the Great Lakes, filled with a plethora of important anniversaries, some of which already have been related in these pages. 1995 was the 100th anniversary of the launch and commissioning of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club's beloved tender HIAWATHA, on which many of us enjoyed a special commemorative excursion in September, complete with the tragic but spectacular crash of a British Nimrod submarine-chasing airplane during the course of the trip.

The 1995 navigation season also saw the 60th anniversary of the commissioning of the Toronto Island ferry WILLIAM INGLIS, (a) SHAMROCK (II)(36), and the 50th anniversary of the end of World War Two, a conflict which very greatly affected lake shipping. That war claimed many of our old familiar canal steamers, which fell victim to enemy action on unfamiliar waters, but also saw the introduction to lake trade of some most significant ore-carrying steamers of revolutionary design, and two of those were returned to active service during this 50th anniversary year.

1995 also saw the 55th anniversary of the Armistice Day storm of November 11, 1940, a storm which caused incredible havoc to shipping, particularly on Lake Michigan. Strangely, November 11, 1995, saw its own disturbance of major proportions, only this time its victim was on Lake Ontario. More about this later.

1995 also saw the 30th anniversary of the retirement of Canada's last six inland-waters overnight passenger vessels, KEEWATIN, ASSINIBOIA, TADOUSSAC, RICHELIEU, ST. LAWRENCE and KEENORA, all victims of the new safety-at-sea regulations that would kick in during 1966.

It also saw the 20th anniversary of the loss of the 729-foot lake steamer EDMUND FITZGERALD in a November gale on Lake Superior, and during 1995, the FITZGERALD's bell was recovered from the wreck, to be a lasting memorial to the 29 crew members who lost their lives in the tragic accident. Twenty years after the loss of the FITZ, officials seemingly are no closer to determining why the ship foundered, although we still feel that the physical evidence visible about the wreck and wreckage ashore tells us exactly why and how the ship met her doom.

This year has seen the settling-in of the second-season operations of Seaway Bulk Carriers, operating the straight-deckers formerly in the C.S.L., Upper Lakes Shipping, Algoma Central, Misener and Pioneer fleets. The grain business was remarkably good, despite the ending of the Crowe grain shipping subsidies, and the Canadian grain fleet stayed busy, although it did lose a few "fringe" vessels which were sold for scrapping.

Iron ore backhauls up the Seaway have been strong, sufficient that Dofasco at Hamilton required an innovative replacement for one of its ore bridges that collapsed during the spring. This produced the reactivation of the idle