

the testimony of the master, which it called "self-serving" and "false".

When the final decision was handed down, it concluded that TOPDALSFJORD had been operating with reasonable caution under the circumstances. Captain Joppich, however, was castigated for a number of errors, including failure to reduce speed in poor visibility, especially when there was knowledge of another vessel in the immediate vicinity, and failure to sound a danger signal when he did not receive an answer to the one-blast passing signals which CEDARVILLE blew before the impact. And although the effort to beach the vessel was proper, it was begun too late and the captain should have steered the correct course for the nearest shoal water. The Coast Guard's suspension and revocation committee considered the question of Captain Joppich's master's license, and suspended it for one year. The captain, however, retired from the lakes and never sailed a vessel again.

Things went even harder for CEDARVILLE's master and owners when the question of 31 claims for compensatory and punitive damages was heard in U.S. District Court during 1967. While both the United States Steel Corporation and the owners of TOPDALSFJORD eventually admitted liability for compensatory damages, U.S. Steel contested the punitive damage claims. "The Plain Dealer" of Cleveland reported on October 28, 1967, that Judge James C. Connell, in handing down his judgment (without actual calculation of punitive damages to be awarded) came down very heavily against the Corporation and Captain Joppich in particular, and did award punitive damages to the plaintiffs.

According to that newspaper report, "... in his 75-page decision, Judge Connell criticized Captain Joppich... as 'wanton', 'callous' and 'almost grotesque' in his indifference to the safety of his crew.

"Judge Connell said there had been no reasonable chance of beaching the CEDARVILLE after the collision, and added: 'During the 17-minute interval between the collision and the turn for the beach, while CEDARVILLE lay at anchor with the German vessel WEISSENBURG nearby begging to come alongside, the entire crew could have been evacuated to complete safety.'

"Judge Connell said Joppich travelled through the dense fog at full speed, deviated from courses recommended by the U.S. Coast Guard, failed to reduce speed or stop and reverse when he got no signal from the TOPDALSFJORD, and failed to know the manoeuvring characteristics of his own vessel.

"The judge said that Joppich failed to clear the engine rooms of all personnel, abandon ship when the hopelessness of beaching became apparent, or release any of the crew even when the decks of the CEDARVILLE were awash..."

Judge Connell said that he would "appoint a commissioner 'very soon' to determine the amount of compensatory damages to be paid to the 31 claimants. The punitive damage figure is expected to be decided after compensatory damages are totalled. Almost \$10.5 million has been asked in compensation. No actual figure was demanded for punitive damages."

Thus the active life of a very handsome lake steamer ended suddenly and violently in an accident that never should have happened, and with loss of life that could have been prevented. To this day, the wreck of CEDARVILLE still lies on the bottom of the Straits of Mackinac, salvage never having been considered practicable. Many divers have tried to explore the wreck, but it is dangerous indeed because of the local water conditions, as a number of divers have learned to their misfortune.

CEDARVILLE eventually was replaced in the Bradley fleet by the former Pittsburgh Steamship Division "Maritime Class" steamer GEORGE A. SLOAN, (a) HILL ANNEX (43), which, like MYRON C. TAYLOR and CALCITE II, was converted to a self-unloader, was repowered with a diesel engine (in 1984), and remains active to this day in what has become known as the USS Great Lakes Fleet Inc.