

Lines. It seems hard to imagine how the two vessels could be confused, considering that the ALGOSTREAM/SIMCOE is a 730-foot bulk carrier, while C.C.G.S. SIMCOE is only 179 feet in overall length. In any event, a report from Walvis Bay, South Africa, indicated that the tug NIKOLAYEV had towed the two ships from that port on August 15th, bound for India. A further report, dated September 6th, indicated that the tow had encountered heavy weather off Port Elizabeth, but as the port had refused entry to the NIKOLAYEV, the tug WOLRAAD WOLTEMADE had been dispatched to assist the tow. Reports also indicate that Chenco International, of Puyallup, Washington, is the current owner of CANADIAN HUNTER. This firm has also been involved with the overseas scrapping of other lakers in past years.

A familiar Lake Erie tug has recently changed hands. The tug THOMAS A. PAYETTE, (a) P. J. MURER (81), (b) MICHAEL D. MISNER (93), built in 1948 by Russel Bros. Ltd. at Owen Sound, had been owned since 1993 by Lower Lakes Towing Company, which had acquired her from Great Lakes Contractors Inc. She now has been purchased by Nadro Marine, of Port Dover, Ontario, and the new owner has renamed her (d) PROGRESS.

McKeil Marine Ltd. has had its former carferry barge (and former steamer) ST. CLAIR, (a) PERE MARQUETTE 12 (70), stripped of her tracks and superstructure at Port Maitland, thus making her into a deck barge. Her first work in her new capacity was to load the pilothouse and texas cabin from the P & H steamer BEECHGLEN, recently scrapped at Port Maitland, and deliver them to Port Burwell, where the deckhouses will be used as a museum.

The business section of "The Globe and Mail" on September 28th carried a feature article entitled "The Sinking of Socanav", which detailed the tanker operator's decline in fortune over the last several years. The article began: "Michel Gaucher's naval (sic) fleet was once the largest in North America (sic). Now, four years after heavy debts forced him to cede control of grocery giant Steinberg Inc., Mr. Gaucher is scrambling to keep the remainder of his much-diminished empire afloat. His Montreal-based shipping company, Socanav Inc., sought refuge from its creditors in bankruptcy court last week, only hours after securing a buyer for its four remaining ships. If creditors accept a repayment plan, which must be presented by Oct. 21, Socanav will be left only with its 20-percent stake in a Miami ship management concern and about \$20 million (U.S.) in Arizona real estate, left over from its ill-fated Steinberg adventure."

The article continued, noting that the last four tankers were sold for \$11.2 million to "a mysterious buyer", Gorse Down Canada, which has caused concern amongst the authorities and the fleet's employees, shareholders and creditors, most notably in respect of whether the parties were dealing "at arm's length", as required. Michel Gaucher's wife, Nancy Orr-Gaucher, was a director of Gorse Down Canada (whose direct owner is Gorse Down Tankers Inc., Barbados) until July, and Michael Wilcock was president of both Socanav and Gorse Down until his resignation from Socanav in September. The article also noted that Socanav and Panama Carriers Corp., of Panama City, are partners in the Miami-based Star Management Ltd., and that Panama Carriers (controlling shareholder of Gorse Down, it happens) "has purchased other ships from Mr. Gaucher's company". This last comment appears to refer to the sale last December of L. ROCHETTE and J. C. PHILLIPS for \$6 million; their "official" new ownership and names have previously been reported in "Scanner".

It has been said that the loss by Socanav of its principal float, for Ultramar Canada Inc., was directly related to accidents involving its two deep-sea ships, ICE VINHA (which sustained damage in a collision with a barge) and ICE PURHA (which was out of service for three weeks in the autumn of 1995 as a consequence of an engineroom fire).

The final outcome of all of this is yet to take place, but the losses could be heavy for many involved. It seems that a tangled web has, indeed, been woven...