

In our October issue, we mentioned the movement to the Outer Harbour Marina at Toronto of the Texas and pilothouse from the Essroc Canada Inc. cement carrier METIS, and we also stated that the hull of the ship was still performing cement storage duty at Green Bay, Wisconsin, where she had been since August of 1993. Little did we know that, while we were writing those words, METIS was on the move. At about the end of September (we are not yet certain of the exact date), METIS was towed out of Green Bay and down to Windsor, Ontario, where she will continue her use for cement storage. Interestingly, there now is another cement storage hull at Green Bay, this being the 1923-built Inland Lakes Transportation Inc. steamer LEWIS G. HARRIMAN, (a) JOHN W. BOARDMAN (65). She last operated in 1980 and was used for storage at Green Bay from 1982 until 1990, when she was moved to Milwaukee. The HARRIMAN was towed from Milwaukee to Green Bay at about the same time as METIS was towed from Green Bay to Windsor.

Disappearing from Toronto during October was the 1983-built AURORA BOREALIS of Club Canamac Cruises. Her destination was Windsor, where she will operate the service which was run there by her fleetmate, the newer and larger STELLA BOREALIS. The STELLA, meanwhile, is returning to her former Toronto home. The explanation for the switch of boats involves patronage at the two ports; the excursion trade at Toronto is such that the larger vessel is needed here, while AURORA BOREALIS will be able to handle the business at Windsor.

Observers who hoped to see carferry service across Lake Erie in 1996 have been disappointed, as the Port Stanley Cleveland Ferry Corp. has not yet commenced operations. The boat which was to be used for the service was the former Ann Arbor Railroad ferry VIKING, (a) ANN ARBOR NO. 7 (65), which was brought to Port Stanley in June and since has been registered in Belize under the name (c) VIKING I. However, there now seems to be some doubt as to whether VIKING I will ever operate on Lake Erie, although her owner states that it does intend to commence service in 1997 albeit, perhaps, with a different vessel.

Problems appear to involve several factors, including the departure from the company's employ of VIKING I's master during September, problems over the presence of asbestos aboard the ferry which caused the Canadian government to issue a stop-work order against the reconstruction of the ferry's cabins, and difficulties in arranging for customs inspection facilities on the U.S. side of the lake. As well, there have been some indications that the ownership of the ferry is undergoing reorganization and may adopt a different operating name.

The ferry herself no longer was at Port Stanley when we penned these words. First of all, Transport Canada ordered the VIKING I out of Port Stanley harbour because she was blocking access to the port by other commercial vessels. In fact, on October 15, the government had two tugs tow VIKING I out into the lake to allow another ship to pass out of the harbour, and she could not immediately return because of unfavourable weather conditions. It had become evident that VIKING I would not be allowed to stay over the winter in her usual berth, and she could not stay alongside the former Wharf restaurant, which an affiliate of the ferry corporation has been preparing for use as a terminal because the dock facing has not yet been made suitable for such mooring.

Much to the surprise of observers, VIKING I departed Port Stanley under her own power during the very early morning hours of October 17th, and by mid-morning she was berthed at Erie, Pennsylvania, where she apparently will spend the winter. In a news conference held on October 18, ferry corporation president Jeff Jenner announced that the Port Stanley Cleveland Ferry Corp. had "dropped out of a deal to buy the ferry" but said that the owner of the boat (Contessa Cruise Lines Inc., of Minnesota) had "confirmed that the ship was still available for our purchase" pending renovation arrangements.