

Each year, as the Christmas Holidays draw near, your Editor looks forward to having an opportunity to chat with all of our members on an informal basis, and to pass along the particularly special wishes which are exchanged among friends at this wonderful time of year. In no other issue can we spare the space in the pages of "Scanner" for such ramblings, but because we consider all of the members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society to be one big, happy "family" of friends, we believe that it is very important for us to find the necessary space in the December issue.

This also permits us the opportunity to reflect on the year that has passed, 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. This is the 28th time that your Editor has penned such holiday season thoughts for our readers, and we are happy that so many of you remain with us and are there to read these words.

The 1996 season has been one of rather mixed blessings for the U.S. and Canadian fleets. The economy actually took a long-awaited upturn during the year, but the mid-summer grain trade was almost non-existent, despite the strong start and season that had been forecast. Things can change quickly...

Canadian and U.S. self-unloader fleets were kept busy during the year, and Canadian conversions continue. One lake self-unloader which had been running on salt water was returned to the lakes in 1996, and more will make that same move in 1997. C.S.L.'s SAGUENAY remained idle at Toronto, the victim of poor condition, but she was the only Canadian s-u to be inactive.

The lake tanker fleets continued to take it on the chin, not only because of business instability but also because of internal problems coupled with impending government censure of single-hull tankers. The Soconav and EnerChem fleets both have had their reversals of fate during the year since last we spoke, and a number of tankers have left the lakes.

The iron ore trade remained strong through the year and the U.S. ore fleet operated at almost full capacity. The USS Great Lakes Fleet's EDWIN H. GOTT made her appearance with her new swinging unloading boom replacing the transverse shuttle boom with which she was equipped when built in 1979. However, despite hopes that she would operate late this season, even without a boom, the Inland Steel straight-decker EDWARD L. RYERSON remained in lay-up. There still has been no self-unloader conversion for her.

A major change occurred in the U.S. cement trade on the lakes. The Lafarge Corporation commissioned its 460-foot barge INTEGRITY during the summer, the barge being handled by the tug JACKLYN M. However, this event soon was followed by major changes in the Inland Lakes Transportation fleet, which has carried for Lafarge in recent years. There was an ownership change, and the entire fleet went into lay-up, only a very few ships having since re-entered service, and then with new crews. All this unfortunately meant that the 98-year-old steamer E. M. FORD did not get to operate this autumn, as originally had been intended by Inland Lakes.

Happily, there were not many scrappings during the year, although American Steamship's venerable self-unloader NICOLET went to the breakers at Port Maitland, and the long-idle tanker CONGAR (III) was acquired by scrappers at Toronto. The former P&H steamer ELMGLEN (II), which had been lying at Sorel for a number of years after her shipbreaker-owner went out of business without selling her for scrap overseas, was saved from the torches and now is being converted to a barge for St. Lawrence River service.

On the shipbuilding scene, things seem happier than they have for many years. There was no labour strife in the trade this year, and Port Weller Dry Docks was very active, completing the conversion of CAPT. HENRY JACKMAN this spring, rebuilding the sides on ALGOVILLE, and now gearing up for the conversion of CANADIAN NAVIGATOR over the winter. The PASCOL shipyard at