

Some ships seem to be dogged by ill fortune, and a lake tug has proved to be a perfect example of this during the 1997 navigation season. The VENTURE is a small tug, 65.0 x 14.1 x 8.0, 67 Gross and 9 Net Tons, which is owned by Ryba Marine Construction Company, of Cheboygan, Michigan. She was built in 1922 at Buffalo as the fishtug (a) E. W. SUTTON, and became (b) VENTURE in 1952. She was rebuilt in 1954 and again in 1958. Ryba has had a contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do work this year on the compensating gates in the St. Mary's Rapids between the U.S. and Canadian canals. On May 19th, while attempting to move a barge in the area Ryba was working at the time, VENTURE got sucked up against - and partially in - Gate No. 8. Partially submerged, VENTURE was trapped in the gate for six days until Ryba crews could extricate her using slings and pumps. She then was taken to the Reiss Coal Dock above the Soo Canal for repairs. VENTURE then resumed her duties on what officially is known as the Lake Superior Compensating Works, but in the early morning hours of August 5th, VENTURE found herself in almost exactly the same predicament as she had two and a half months earlier. VENTURE suffered a loss of power and the current dragged her down against another of the compensating gates. She came to rest on the bottom in some eight to ten feet of water, but was not badly damaged and there was no escape of fuel. Ryba crews, again assisted by tugs from the Canadian Sault, brought VENTURE once more to the surface.

The Maid of the Mist Steamboat Company Ltd. now has five excursion vessels on the water in the Niagara Gorge, the first time in the history of the sightseeing operation that such a large fleet has been active. MAID OF THE MIST VII, built by Cartier Construction at Belleville, Ontario, was christened on July 11th and launched into the Niagara River. Sponsors of the vessel were Mary Jo Farrell, daughter of company president James V. Glynn, and her eleven-month-old daughter, Serena. The new ship is 80 feet in length and has a capacity of 600 passengers. She joins MAIDS VI, V, IV and III, and the 1972-built MAID OF THE MIST III will now be held in reserve.

Launched at Marinette, Wisconsin, by Marinette Marine on August 23rd was the United States Coast Guard's 175-foot coastal buoy tender MARCUS HANNA. The fourth of ten Keeper Class tenders being built by Marinette, the HANNA is named for the keeper of the Maine coast's Cape Elizabeth Light during the Civil War.

A potentially dangerous accident occurred at the Snell Lock in the Seaway on Sunday, August 24th. The Maltese tanker VEKUA, entering the lock at 8:32 a.m. and bound for Hamilton with a cargo of jet fuel, suffered a four-inch fracture in a starboard tank and 300 gallons of the highly inflammable fluid escaped into the lock chamber. Emergency response teams were alerted and campers at a nearby camp site were evacuated, but the jet fuel evaporated on its own in a few hours, and by 4:00 p.m., the VEKUA was able to resume her canal transit.

One of the two Canada Steamship Lines self-unloaders idle at Toronto has now left her lay-up berth, although not to return to C.S.L. service. SAGUENAY, a 730-foot motorship built as a straight-decker in 1964 by Davie at Lauzon, and deepened and converted to a self-unloader in 1972, had been idle at Toronto since November 30th, 1992, for most of that time at the old Texaco dock on the north side of the Ship Channel, just inside the Cherry Street bridge. SAGUENAY recently has been acquired by interests in Thunder Bay, who apparently intend to use her first in the clean-up of a polluted section of the Thunder Bay harbour bottom, and later as a cargo transfer facility. The identity of the new owners was not known when this report was written. However, SAGUENAY, with her name and the C.S.L. "billboards" on her sides painted out, was towed out of Toronto at noon on September 28th by FLORENCE McKEIL and GLENSIDE. The tow was taken over at Port Colborne by the Purvis Marine tug AVENGER IV for the remainder of the tow to Thunder Bay. C.S.L.'s TARANTAU remains in lay-up at Toronto, but her disposal appears imminent.