

Well, here we are again! The holidays are coming and your Editor gets to pen something extremely personal to the members instead of writing features or marine news or obituaries for departed members. Can it be that we have been producing "Scanner" for 31 years, and that this is THIS editor's thirtieth volume of the newsletter? That is, indeed, a very humbling thought and one that gives us pause to wonder how much longer we can keep a good thing going. The response of the members, however, does make up for the grief we suffer as deadlines loom and inspiration falters...

Christmas Card Time! For those of us who send photo greetings to our marine historian friends, it can be a time of major stress. What photo to use? Have we ever used that one before but just can't recall doing so? Why did we buy cards before making sure the photos would fit inside? Why can't we find a card that says what we want to say in its greeting? Why aren't the prints ready in time, and why do we always run out of stamps before the cards all are sent? And why can't our mailing list EVER be up to date?

But there is no stress at all involved in passing along the greetings of the season to our members via these pages. In fact, this is one of your Editor's very most favourite times of year, because we get to speak to all members right from the heart. In no other "Scanner" issue can we spare the space for such sentiments, but because we consider all of the many members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society to be one big, happy family of friends, we make absolutely certain that we have space available in the December issue. And if the truth were known, it means that we can write a shorter feature for this issue!

As usual, as we write the first draft of these words, it is the week of Remembrance Day. And, as usual, our thoughts are not only on man's inhumanity to man and the sacrifice paid by so many to preserve our freedom, but we also think of the first blast of winter weather which always seems to come at this time. We had a nasty storm on November 12-13, and much the same thing happened in 1997. Neither of these aberrations, however, came near to the severity of the November 14, 1933, storm that sank the tug FLORENCE and grounded ships elsewhere, or the disastrous Armistice Day Storm of 1940, which blasted the whole lakes area but concentrated most of its wrath on Lake Michigan, where ships and men both gave up their lives to the tempest.

But after a cool spring, the summer and autumn were absolutely beautiful all around the lakes in 1998, warm and dry. In fact, it was one of the warmest and driest on record in these parts, great for photography and any other form of ship appreciation. It saw the return of C. COLUMBUS to the lake cruise market, and she won't be the only ship here in 1999. But it's been far too long since we've been able to cruise the lakes on a genuine lake steamer. The Toronto-Prescott service ended in 1949 as well as the C.S.L. upper lakes run; the D & C boats gave up in the early 1950s; the C.P.R. and Saguenay River services ended in 1965, and the Chicago, Duluth & Georgian Bay Transit Company retired SOUTH AMERICAN thirty-one years ago this past October. (Wasn't it only yesterday we made that last trip?)

Was 1998 a year of centenary importance? It was for the cement boat E. M. FORD, (a) PRESQUE ISLE (I)(56), which was built at Cleveland in 1898. Much rebuilt from her original appearance, she still has her original quadruple expansion steam engine in her, and she has survived bad times that would have done in ships of less mettle. But even though mostly inactive in recent years, she lives on, an acknowledged (even by her owners) relic not only of this entire century but also of the last few years of a previous century that most of us never knew. The import of all of this may hit home with those of us who have had to deal with "Y2K" computer problems centring around yet another change in centuries and a change in millenium to boot!

1998 also saw the hundredth anniversary of the launch of the little passenger steamer BROCKVILLE, which was Ship of the Month in the November issue.