

There was not much ice for the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker MACKINAW to crunch this year, but she was in service anyway, showing off her new red hull, designed to make her more visible in the ice. After she finished up with the ice on Lake Superior, she headed down system and made a rare appearance on Lake Ontario. She made a visit to Toronto on April 14th, and Ye Ed. received a number of enquiries as to what "The Big Red Boat" was...!

Unfortunately, the early part of the season saw several groundings, and low water conditions all around the lakes system may cause additional problems as the season wears onward. The most serious accident involved the Algoma Central Marine straight-decker ALGONTARIO. Early on Monday, April 5th, while upbound with a cargo of cement, ALGONTARIO struck a boulder in the east margin of the turn at Sailors' Encampment, in the lower end of the Middle Neebish Channel. Serious damage was suffered, and the ship was not refloated until April 7th, when shifting of fuel from starboard to port tanks and off-loading of some of the fuel into a barge allowed the ship to be refloated. Allowed to proceed upbound, ALGONTARIO spent a day at the Carbide Dock at the Michigan Soo, and on April 8th was allowed to proceed to Duluth to unload her cargo. She then went to Thunder Bay, where repairs, estimated in excess of \$1 million, were to be put in hand by the Pascol shipyard. Of special interest is the fact that, while upbound traffic was backing up below the accident site, two vessels, ROGER BLOUGH and H. LEE WHITE were allowed to pass upbound through the one-way downbound West Neebish Channel, which includes the swift water of the Neebish Rock Cut. Both ships made the unusual passage safely.

Meanwhile, just after noon on April 6th, the USS Great Lakes Fleet's self-unloader ARTHUR M. ANDERSON struck a rock in the channel leading out of Rogers City, Michigan, after she had loaded a cargo of stone there. Part of the ship's cargo was off-loaded into Oglebay Norton's WOLVERINE, and after the ANDERSON was floated free, she returned to Rogers City and unloaded the rest of her cargo. She then proceeded to the Bay Shipbuilding yard at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, where repairs were to be effected.

The first accident of the year involving a salty on the lakes occurred at about 6:20 p.m. on Saturday, April 24th, when the Bahamian tanker SUNNY BLOSSOM went aground on Allan Otty shoal in Lake Ontario, some eight miles west of Cape Vincent. The ship was bound for Sarnia with a load of caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) when the grounding occurred. The double-hulled tanker was refloated several days later, without damage and with no spillage of cargo.

For the last two winters, Nautical Adventures (Eric and Kathie Rogers) has sent its sail excursion vessel EMPIRE SANDY from Toronto to the Bahamas for winter service. This spring, the return of EMPIRE SANDY to the lakes has been made difficult due to engine problems suffered en route. At last report, EMPIRE SANDY was at Charleston, South Carolina, and the engine from the Rogers' former fishing boat MISS KRISTY, very similar to the one in EMPIRE SANDY, was being sent south as a replacement. These problems have delayed the return of EMPIRE SANDY, but it is said that she WILL, in fact, be back on Toronto Bay in the party business this summer.

Still making the news, especially in the Rochester area, are plans by Lake Ontario Fast Ferry Corp. to put two 300-foot fast catamarans on the Toronto to Rochester service. Construction of the two ships must begin in June if there is any hope of the service beginning in the year 2000; the ships are to be built in Australia. Meanwhile, in an apparent effort to reassure its sources of funding, the new company has let it be known that it will ask Ontario Northland Transport Corp. to operate to "help operate the service". Ontario Northland is involved in the operation of the Manitoulin and Pelee Island ferry services and has a solid track record in trains and ships.