

MARINE NEWS

A former lake vessel has returned from salt water. Arriving at Hamilton (and now registered there) on November 21st was LORENA 1, the 1961-built (a) FRENCH RIVER (81), (b) JENSEN STAR (86), (c) WOODLAND (91), (d) WOODLANDS (99), which originally was built at Collingwood as a package freighter (with a carferry-type hull) for Canada Steamship Lines. The vessel has been operating intermittently on salt water in recent years, but now has been acquired by McKeil Marine Ltd., and returned to the lakes. We understand that McKeil hopes to operate the vessel in Arctic supply service during the summer months. We wish her well on her return to Canadian ownership.

The newest Lower Lakes Towing acquisition, the 1953-built self-unloading steamer JOHN J. BOLAND (III), was christened (b) SAGINAW in ceremonies held at Sarnia on Saturday, November 20th. By the time these words appear in print, SAGINAW probably will be in service, because her new owner planned to have her running as soon after December 1st as possible. We can't wait to see her running in Lower Lakes colours!

There have been developments in the efforts by Lake Ontario Fast Ferry Inc. to bring a high-speed ferry service to a route between Toronto and Rochester, New York. Last issue, we noted that the tentative start date for the service had been set back from the summer of 2000 to 2001, having lost its "window" for the construction of the two big ferries at the intended Australian shipyard. Instead, the company was hoping to have the boats built at a shipyard in The Netherlands. In mid-November, the Rochester press reported that the company now plans to form a U.S. corporation and move its base from Toronto to Rochester once it is certain that the service will become a reality. The firm is reportedly some \$20 million short of the \$120 million in private financing commitments needed to begin operations, and has been having trouble getting the government guarantees that would secure more private support, and feels things would be easier across the border. Meanwhile, the Dutch shipyard, Schelde Shipbuilders, of Zeeland, reportedly plans "to have the craft built at a shipyard in Manitowoc, Wisconsin" so that they will comply with Jones Act requirement for operating between U.S. ports. This strikes us as odd if the ferries are to run across the lake, but the move of the shipbuilding site would appear to have more to do with the drumming up of more federal support for the company in the United States. We are not going to hold our breath waiting to buy a ticket for the new service...

We regret to report that an old friend of ours currently is being broken up at the Verreault Navigation shipyard at Les Mechins, Quebec. She is the sandsucker BV RAINA, the 1926-built canaller which for almost seventy years bore the name CHARLES R. HUNTLEY. She is best known on the lakes for the many years she spent in the fleets of the Eastern Steamship Company Ltd. and the Upper Lakes & St. Lawrence Transportation Company Ltd. She then sucked sand for McNamara Construction for a number of years, and finally went wandering on salt water. Now, after 73 years, she finally has reached the end of the line. She has enjoyed a career much longer than that of most of the canallers, and she is one of the very last few of them to survive.

Earlier this year, we reported on the bankruptcy of Shaker Cruise Lines, of Toronto, and the cessation of operations on its cross-lake ferry service after the Toronto Harbour Commission seized the company's largest boat, LAKE RUNNER, for unpaid wharfage fees. Since early spring, LAKE RUNNER has been secured at the Harbour Commission yard in the Keating Channel, safe inside the Cherry Street north bridge. Now it seems that LAKE RUNNER has been acquired by new owners who intend to take her off the lakes before the close of the 1999 navigation season. She will be classed as a private yacht when she departs. LAKE RUNNER ran to Port Dalhousie for two seasons, but she most certainly was not a ship with fancy fittings, and what she provided was "basic transportation" across the water.