

MARINE NEWS

It has been announced that the Welland and St. Lawrence canals will open for the 2000 navigation season on Monday, March 27th. The relatively favourable weather conditions experienced this winter, together with a late February thaw, bode well for an easy opening of the canals. The Poe Lock at Sault Ste. Marie is scheduled to open for commercial traffic on Saturday, March 25th.

At Port Weller Dry Docks, work is progressing rapidly on the reconstruction of the C.S.L. self-unloader H. M. GRIFFITH. The old stern has been joined to the new midbody and the new bow is taking shape quickly. There has been much speculation concerning the new name that would be selected for the rebuilt ship, and the answer came late in February, when shipyard workmen began painting the new name on the ship's stern. She is to be the RT. HON. PAUL J. MARTIN, and the christening of the ship reportedly will take place during the week in which the Welland Canal opens for the 2000 season. The vessel is named for the father of Canada's current federal finance minister, the latter having been president of CSL Group Inc. before leaving to enter the political field in 1988. The elder Martin had also been a Member of Parliament and later was appointed to the Senate. This is the second ship to be named in his honour; the first, a self-unloader built at Collingwood 1984-5 and was renamed (b) ATLANTIC ERIE in 1988. Some observers had been hoping that the rebuilt GRIFFITH would be given a geographical name, as was the similarly rebuilt J. W. McGIFFIN when she re-entered service as CSL NIAGARA in 1999.

It has been reported that McKeil Marine Ltd. has sold its 149'9" (o.a.) tug VORTICE to interests in Norfolk, Virginia, who have renamed her (e) NORFOLK. The tug, built in 1976 in Texas, served as (a) MUSKETEEER FURY (78), (b) TENDER PANTHER (79) and (c) MARGARITA before becoming VORTICE in 1983. She is of interest because she was burned out near the Azores in 1993 and was towed to Trieste, where McKeil bought her, unrepaired, in 1996. The tow of the burned-out tug across the Atlantic to Canada was widely reported, but McKeil never rebuilt her and we presume that her new owners intend to do so.

During January, John D. (Jack) Leitch, chairman of Upper Lakes Group Inc., was named by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson as an Officer of the Order of Canada. The Order of Canada is the nation's most prestigious civilian honour, and Officer of the Order is its second highest rank. The citation noted Mr. Leitch's contributions to the shipping industry in Canada.

With the efforts by the Lake Ontario Fast Ferry Corp. to open a ferry service between Toronto and Rochester still some \$10 million to \$15 million short of the amount needed to secure the loans needed to build its two ferry boats, the Rochester press has reported that competition for the service has emerged. A second investor group, headed by Thomas Riley, of Rochester, and Dominick Delucia, of Victor, New York, is attempting to make its own bid for such a service, and the City of Rochester is trying to encourage other bidders to enter the fray. It seems to be the thought that the more bidders there are, the more likely it is that one of them will come up with the financing necessary to get this expensive project up and running. In January, the "Rochester Democrat and Chronicle" commissioned a poll of Monroe County residents concerning four major projects whose backers are currently seeking state and federal funding. The fast ferry was by far the most popular project, according to the poll, with considerably more resident support than the construction of a performing arts centre, a new downtown bus terminal, or a soccer stadium for the Rochester Rhinos. Meanwhile, there is virtually no mention of the ferry project in any of the Toronto newspapers.

The McKeil tug GLENEVIS left her Toronto lay-up berth late in January (and so missed our Toronto lay-up list!) to take a barge to Oswego, where it loaded an over-length, multi-axle transporter carrying the 100-ton base for a stamping press. GLENEVIS delivered the barge and its cargo to Oshawa, and then returned to Toronto.