

Whitehall Road for the time being, and not at Ward's Island, so we won't be able to check the e-mail every day, but we'll still welcome anything you wish to send along.

Did you remember to renew your T.M.H.S. membership as requested in the Mid-Summer and October issues? If you receive this issue, then your dues are up to date and you are with us for the "new" year. However, if any of your friends remark that they didn't get the November issue, you might gently remind them that we are awaiting their renewal.

In the New Member Department, a hearty welcome goes out to Mark Sparkhall, of Annan, Ontario. We are pleased to have you with us in the Toronto Marine Historical Society.

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MARINE NEWS

Those of us who watch and/or record the comings and goings of Great Lakes ships are sometimes guilty of taking for granted the dangers of these waters. However, as with the rest of life as we know it, reality checks happen and sometimes they bite hard. Since she was built at Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1949, the 46-foot, diesel-powered J. W. WESTCOTT II (U.S.258859) has been the mainstay of the J. W. Westcott Company's mail and pilot boat service at Detroit. The Westcott firm has been operating this service since 1895, and had never lost one of its boats, at least not until the morning of Tuesday, October 23rd, 2001.

Shortly after 7:00 a.m. that morning, J. W. WESTCOTT II was servicing the tanker SIDSEL KNUTSEN for a routine pilot change. Aboard the WESTCOTT were operator Cathy Nasiatka and deckhand David Lewis, as well as pilots Capt. Alain Gindroz (a longtime T.M.H.S. member) and Capt. Tom Roesslein. Suddenly and for reasons yet to be explained, the WESTCOTT was swamped and sank. The two pilots managed to escape the sinking vessel and were located by the tanker, which turned to search for them, and they were picked from the water by the McKeil tug STORMONT. The two WESTCOTT crew members, however, were not so lucky and both have been missing since the accident. The WESTCOTT was located off the Old Rouge River, upside down and facing upstream, with 18 feet of water over her.

Salvage efforts were begun as soon as possible, with traffic past the wreck site being restricted, but intense heavy weather moving into the area forced the suspension of salvage work late on the 24th. The work resumed on the 28th, at which time the WESTCOTT was rolled over upright, but efforts to lift her were not immediately successful. Work continues as we write these words. Mail and pilot service resumed on the 24th, using the back-up boat JOSEPH J. HOGAN, assisted by the Port Huron pilotboat HURON MAID. At the scene have been a number of local boats, including the Gaelic tug CAROLYN HOEY working with the Ferriss Marine barge F-103, and the Detroit fireboat CURTIS RAN-DOLPH.

We extend condolences to the Westcott Company and to the families of the lost crew members.

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2001 has not been a good year for many North American iron mining or steel producing companies. Some protection against foreign producers "dumping" cheap steel products onto the North American market has been obtained, however, and this year there have been almost no saltwater ships unloading steel products in Toronto. But the damage was done, and the downturn in the economy has not helped matters at all. The latest of the big steel companies to experience major problems is the venerable Bethlehem Steel Corporation, which filed on October 15th for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Problems cited by Bethlehem include high labour and retiree benefit costs. The company, which once ran a large fleet of lake freighters, now operates only the 1,000-footers STEWART J. CORT and BURNS HARBOR.