

In the Mid-Summer issue, when noting the untimely end of the ARCADIA's lake cruise service, we remarked upon the coming to the lakes of Delta Queen Coastal Voyages' CAPE MAY LIGHT, and the fact that both she and her as-yet-uncompleted sister, CAPE COD LIGHT, would be in the lakes for the summer of 2002. We wished them well. In an unrelated matter, in a press release dated October 9th, D.Q.C.V. and the affiliated Delta Queen Steamboat Company announced some changes to their 2002 schedules, the most interesting of these being the complete reworking of the venerable DELTA QUEEN's 2002 schedule in response to the howls of protest voiced by the QUEEN's loyal following of passengers over a schedule that would have seen her virtually confined to the Lower Mississippi River.

Exactly ten days after this press release came another stating that American Classic Voyages Inc. (parent of Delta Queen Steamboat Company and Delta Queen Coastal Voyages) had made a voluntary Chapter 11 filing for bankruptcy protection to allow it to reorganize. Its Hawaii cruise ships INDEPENDENCE and PATRIOT (the former NIEUW AMSTERDAM), the Columbia River cruise vessel COLUMBIA QUEEN, and the Mississippi system's AMERICAN QUEEN and MISSISSIPPI QUEEN would all cease operations at the end of the trips they then were on, and only DELTA QUEEN herself would continue in operation. While the announced reason for the move was to "preserve our present cash supply, improve our balance sheet and minimize the impact, as much as we are able, on affected passengers and other stakeholders" in light of decreased bookings and increased cancellations following the September 11 attacks, most observers feel that the building of two new Hawaii ships as well as CAPE MAY LIGHT and CAPE COD LIGHT represented too much expansion too quickly, and a move away from the river trade which was the heart of the company's business. A.M.C.V. said it would be working with Northrup Grumman Corporation (builder) and the U.S. Maritime Administration to maintain construction of the two new Hawaii ships (despite huge cost over-runs to date).

It is, as yet, unclear what effect all this will have on DELTA QUEEN, AMERICAN QUEEN and MISSISSIPPI QUEEN for the 2002 season, much less whether lake ship fans will have a chance to cruise our inland seas on CAPE MAY LIGHT and CAPE COD LIGHT. We can but hope for the best in these troubled times.

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The Canadian Vickers-built tugs operated in the Lake Superior area by the Abitibi Power and Paper Company were some of the most handsome tugs ever built on the lakes. They are also proving to be amongst the most durable, as a number of them survive on the lakes as well as on salt water. One of these is KAM, built in 1938. She left the lakes in 1967 and went to British Columbia, where she served as (b) GULF IVY, (c) SWIFTSURE X, (d) SEASPAN EXPLORER and (e) GULF IVY. Her Canadian registry was closed in January 2000, and she recently was rebuilt into an excursion boat whilst moored in the Fraser River near New Westminster, B.C. Now owned by U.S. interests who will use her at Margarita Island in Venezuela (where she is registered), she has been renamed (f) EL CONQUISTADOR.

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A major storm that swept across the Great Lakes on October 24 and 25 was so strong that ships were forced to remain in port for several days or to find sheltered anchorage. There appear, however, to have been no major accidents related to the disturbance. All this does, however, remind us that winter is coming, and in this regard we should note that closing dates have been announced for the Seaway. The St. Lawrence section will accept transits up to midnight on December 20th. The Welland Canal is scheduled to close at 8:00 a.m. on December 24th, but later transits may be accepted subject to demand and weather conditions.

Meanwhile, efforts to resolve a contract dispute between the Seaway and its employees went down to the wire, with strike action pending and vessels were at anchor to avoid their becoming strikebound within the canals. A tentative