

Too late for inclusion in this issue will come word of the identity of the successful bidder(s) for the idled LTV Corp. steel mills at Cleveland and East Chicago. LTV reportedly will choose from amongst various bids on February 27th, with bankruptcy court approval for that choice on the 28th. Amongst the ten prospective buyers are Hamilton's Dofasco Inc., which was the only integrated steel producer in North America to turn a profit in 2001, and Cleveland Steel Inc., a new corporation formed by former managers from LTV and Republic Technologies. Two of the other firms interested in the LTV mills are the United States Steel Corporation and Bethlehem Steel Corp., the latter itself operating under a Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection filing. Meanwhile, Cleveland-Cliffs Inc., North America's largest producer of iron ore, announced that while it would not itself be bidding for the LTV operations, it would be prepared to offer financial assistance to certain of the bidders. Further, Cliffs stated that if none of the formal bids prove to be successful, Cliffs would be interested in acquiring the assets "in negotiations with LTV". It will be very interesting to see how this whole matter plays out, as the future of the LTV mills will have very important ramifications for the lake shipping industry.

While the closing of the LTV operations at Cleveland have produced a dramatic decrease in the amount of cargo being shipped on the Cuyahoga River, a bridge problem has threatened to stop spring traffic on the river completely. Late in January, the U.S. Coast Guard ordered closed for repairs the Norfolk Southern Railroad's lift bridge, the most downriver of all of the Cuyahoga bridges. While trains have still been able to move across the bridge, the span has been locked down and no vessels have been able to pass beneath. The bridge was to have been operable again on February 19th, but a few days earlier, additional defects were found in the 1954-built bridge and the Coast Guard ordered it locked down until repairs could be completed. Shippers and local businesses were up in arms over the additional closure, particularly as it might keep the bridge inoperative until April or May, thus resulting in huge business losses. It then was said that if a cracked shaft could be replaced in time, the bridge could open as of March 25th, with the rest of the repairs being done next winter. Even the March 25th date is a major problem, as shipping on the river was to begin before that, and four ships (Oglebay Norton's FRED R. WHITE JR. and EARL W. OGLEBAY, Inland Lakes' ALPENA, and the barge ST. MARYS CEMENT) are trapped upriver of the closed bridge. ALPENA had been scheduled to depart her winter berth on March 1st, so her fit-out will be considerably delayed. Efforts to resolve the problem were ongoing at the time of this writing.

It was an interesting coincidence that we chose a winter ice newsphoto of the whaleback SOUTH PARK for our "Great Lake Memories" page in the February issue. SOUTH PARK, of course, later became the tanker METEOR, and now is preserved as a museum at Barker's Island, Superior, Wisconsin. A report appearing in the November/December 2001 issue of the Newsletter of the Association for Great Lakes Maritime History noted that the METEOR has been suffering from extremely poor attendance, especially in comparison with the WILLIAM A. IRVIN which is a museum at Duluth. There also was some bad press concerning safety aspects of the METEOR which, in reality, were not justified. METEOR presently is managed by Superior Public Museums. We sincerely hope that ways can be found to resolve METEOR's problems, as it is extremely important that the preservation of this, the very last of the whalebacks, be continued.

Just as shipping observers all over the lakes are shedding tears over the sale for scrapping of KINSMAN ENTERPRISE, word comes that General Mills is giving consideration to fitting the Frontier Elevator at Buffalo to receive grain shipments by self-unloaders. Such a conversion would undoubtedly spell the end of the last "Kinsman" ship, the KINSMAN INDEPENDENT. The INDEPENDENT currently is wintering at Buffalo and is scheduled to operate in the spring.