

broke away from Mom, raced across the tracks, and got as close as I could. The crane bucket lowered five or six people at a time to the dock, and in the last bucket-load, Dad came down. I rushed up and hugged him. He was a mess. He wore (just) a pair of pants, and his chest, arms and face were smudged. He was soaking wet, having jumped into the water (some sixty feet down) from the wheelhouse bridge (after manoeuvring the ship from the burning shed to the relative safety of the coal dock), and his feet were bare as he walked on the cinders. After another hug, he asked one of the bystanders to take me back to a safer area.

"By the time I got back to my mother and my sister, some friends had gathered around them. I was able to announce that my Dad was alive and working with the crew to get everyone off the ship. It was a great relief.

"With the anxiety about my father lifted, I turned my boyish attention to what else was happening. Purdy Fisheries was less than fifty yards (down-river) from the burning HAMONIC. They were moving their boats and placing them around the ship and fishing people out of the water when they jumped. They also put out at least two flat barges, used for their pond nets, and nudged them alongside the ship's gangway doors. From there, passengers who had been gathered by the crew (and taken down through the ship) could step off safely and be ferried ashore. The U.S. Coast Guard had dispatched a cutter from their base just above the Blue Water Bridge (by the Fort Gratiot lighthouse) and their crew was on station for the longest time lifting people to the cutter's deck and wrapping them in blankets. All the while, upbound and downbound freighters moved slowly and cautiously past the smoldering remains of the terminal and the burning vessel. I have often wondered what their crews were thinking as they lined their decks, watching the demise of another ship.

"The fire trucks came and went. The small Point Edward pumper, led by Chief John Strangway, was the first on the scene and was soon joined by Sarnia trucks and others from (around) Lambton County. The Americans, who could see everything clearly from their shore across the river, sent big units from Port Huron. In spite of all their efforts, however, nothing could be done to save the HAMONIC. The flames engulfed her and she eventually just fell in upon herself. Her superstructure was of steel and wood, and had been so well painted over the years that she burned quickly.

"I have no idea how long we stood there on the tracks. It seemed interminable. Finally a small group of people came over to us and my father was with them. Mom and Joannie hugged him for a long time. Someone had given him a shirt, but he still was barefoot. The smudges I had seen on his arms, chest and face were really burns. It was the Red Cross medical attendants who brought him over to us and insisted that he get to the hospital. We couldn't take him immediately, since our car had been commandeered, along with other civilian vehicles, to transport the injured to the Sarnia General Hospital. A small group of crew, firefighters, police and C.S.L. officials gathered around my Dad and assured him that there was nothing more that he could do.

"Fortunately, his burns were not serious. He recuperated at home, and our family doctor came each day to change his dressings. As a medical student, Dr. W. D. Carruthers had sailed on the HAMONIC as a bellhop, and he had a deep affection for the ship and for my Dad. The press also came every day, camping out in front of our house. Some of them sat on our porch smoking cigars. They all wanted to talk to the Captain and take a few pictures. My mother was having none of that, however. She got her broom, stood in front of the door and told them to 'Go Away!'".

"Within a few weeks, my father was once again 'at sea'. Our family was deeply grateful to the operating manager at Canada Steamship Lines, who believed that Dad should return to sailing as quickly as possible. He was sent to the HURONIC as second captain to Tom McLeod, who had not been well. The appoint-