

The summer in the Great Lakes area was long and hot, one of the warmest on record (at least at Toronto). Autumn started out just like summer and then, in mid-October, turned into winter with plunging temperatures and high winds. As these words were written, your Editor was looking out on an unexpectedly snowy landscape as a mid-November storm buried Southern Ontario and much of Eastern Canada. Continued wintry conditions have put us in mind of the fact that it is time for us to review the 2002 navigation season and to pass along to our members our best wishes for the upcoming holiday season.

If autumn has been blustery, the 2002 season started out with one of the worst windstorms in recent memory. It swept the lower lakes on March 9 and the most havoc was wrought at Port Colborne and Hamilton, where a number of ships were torn from their moorings. The most visible victim was the idle, bridge-wracked WINDOC, which was blown all the way across Hamilton Harbour and grounded at the Burlington end of the bay, near the foot of the Skyway.

The 2002 season was, however, better than 2001 in several ways. Lake water levels were a bit higher than in recent years, allowing more cargo to be carried by commercial vessels, while some yachters were able to get their boats at least close to their docks again. An upturn in economic conditions was good for Canadian steelmakers and helped keep portions of the Canadian fleet quite active. The best news on the U.S. side was the reactivation by International Steel Group Inc. of the idled former LTV Steel Corporation's plants, thus creating a considerable surge in ore and stone shipments and causing the fit-out of several vessels that had been scheduled to stay at the wall for the season. That said, however, the gearless JOHN SHERWIN continued her more than twenty years of idleness and EDWARD L. RYERSON remained in lay-up at Sturgeon Bay but hosted two weekends of public tours. The grain carrier KINSMAN ENTERPRISE (iii) was sent to the scrapyard at Port Colborne and the self-unloaders ELTON HOYT 2nd, RICHARD REISS and JOSEPH H. FRANTZ remained at the wall all season.

There was, however, one of the worst Canadian grain harvests in many years due to continued drought conditions on the prairies, which was not good for Canadian fleets operating straight-deckers. There was a major parade of Canadian ships to the breakers and many gearless bulkers are gone forever. CANADIAN VOYAGER and ALGORIVER were towed to overseas scrapyards, while ALGO-GULF (ii) and COMEAUDOC went to Port Colborne for breaking, and VANDOC (ii) and QUEDOC (iii) were taken to a new scrapyard at the Canadian Soo. CANADIAN VENTURE would have gone to the knackers at Port Colborne except that there is no room for her there at present. One Canadian self-unloader was scrapped, that being the C.S.L. motorship MANITOULIN, which went to Turkey.

There were some notable corporate changes in 2002. The Oglebay Norton and American Steamship firms agreed on an arrangement to pool their fleet operations, while Oglebay Norton moved to acquire the Erie Sand fleet, although to the best of our knowledge, that deal has not yet been consummated. On the Canadian side, the venerable firm of N. M. Paterson & Sons Limited left the shipping business entirely and sold its three operating ships to C.S.L., WINDOC to Groupe Ocean for use as a barge, and the rest for scrap.

Although construction of a new lock at the Soo finally will get underway soon, the prospects of any new ships being built for lake trade are poor. Existing yards continued to do repair work, Port Weller blistered CANADIAN CENTURY into JOHN D. LEITCH, Marinette Marine built tugs and more Coast Guard buoy tenders, and Sturgeon Bay built barges.

There were the usual minor groundings and scrapes, but an early-season event was the rather spectacular grounding of ALGOWOOD in Little Rapids Cut. The most serious accident of the year was the October 12th head-on collision of CANADIAN PROSPECTOR and the Dutch heavy-lift ship STELLANOVA in the Seaway; both received major bow damage.

It gives us much pleasure to extend our thanks to all who have supported the