

After six years of idleness there, the carferry VIKING 1 finally departed Erie, Pennsylvania, on January 14, in tow of the tug OLIVE L. MOORE. The carferry has been acquired by K & K Warehousing, of Menominee, Michigan, and will be cut down to a barge for use in hauling pulpwood from Marathon and Thunder Bay to Menominee. OLIVE L. MOORE had been idle at Escanaba before she fitted out to make the VIKING tow, her last work having been early in 2000. The tow encountered heavy ice conditions on Lake Erie and in the rivers, and was assisted by MANITOU, from Port Huron, and also by JOYCE L. VAN ENKEVORT. Nasty weather also was a problem, delaying the start of the tow by several days. The tow finally arrived at Menominee on the morning of January 18th.

With the extremely cold weather that the Great Lakes region encountered for much of January, ice became a major factor in late-season vessel operations. As we were writing these words, CAPT. RALPH TUCKER was encountering major problems with ice in her attempts to enter port at Manistee, despite the assistance of Andrie tugs. Algoma Central's CAPT. HENRY JACKMAN had been running in the salt trade out of Goderich, but her season came to an end when, on January 24, she was unable to enter Conneaut harbour even with the assistance of the U.S.C.G. MACKINAW. Deterred by the heavy windrows, the JACKMAN finally was escorted back to Detroit where she unloaded, and then she headed for lay-up at Owen Sound. The TUCKER, too, finally gave up went to lay-up.

Speaking of the CAPT. RALPH TUCKER, we must correct an item which appeared in the January issue. It is true that the Manistee calcium chloride plant of General Chemical was closed at the end of 2002, but the company will continue to ship brine from Manistee to Amherstburg, thus keeping the TUCKER and other McKeil Marine units busy in 2003.

It was announced on January 14th by the Oglebay Norton Company that it has completed the acquisition of the Erie Sand and Gravel Company and its affiliates. Consummation of the deal has been many months in the works. It would appear that Erie Sand will be operated as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Oglebay Norton, and Sidney E. Smith III, general manager of Erie Sand, is now also a vice-president of Oglebay Norton. It is not yet clear whether Oglebay Norton will operate Erie Sand's RICHARD REISS. The vessel did not run in 2002.

With the lay-up of KINSMAN INDEPENDENT (iii) at Buffalo with a storage cargo of grain at the close of the 2002 season, observers had been wondering what would become of the ship, and also of Great Lakes Associates Inc., its owner. The ship, the last gearless bulk carrier running on the lakes under the U.S. flag, is no longer required to service the General Mills elevator at Buffalo, as that facility has now added hopper equipment which will allow self-unloaders to bring in its grain. We still do not know what will become of the INDEPENDENT, although scrapping seems likely. But Great Lakes Associates Inc. will continue to function. It has arranged a five-year charter of the 1925-built self-unloader JOSEPH H. FRANTZ from Oglebay Norton and will use her to move grain to Buffalo for General Mills. The ship will be receiving her five-year inspection at Toledo this winter, and she will be repainted in "Kinsman" colours before she enters service, although we understand that there will be no renaming of the FRANTZ during 2003. We are sad to see the INDEPENDENT go, but happy to see the Great Lakes Associates fleet continue and provide a fresh lease on life for the FRANTZ.

The Soo Locks closed for the season on schedule at midnight on January 15th, but the last commercial transit was not made by a large lake freighter. Instead, the last transit was made by the tug RELIANCE and barge PML 9000 during the day of the 15th. The barge had a cargo of steel coils loaded at the Algoma Steel plant. The last upbound passage was made late on the 14th by EDWIN H. GOTT. Like the Welland and St. Lawrence canals, the Soo Locks will open for the 2003 season on March 25th.