

The "Waterfront With Roy" column in "The Telegram", Toronto, of April 19, 1947, reported: "Some Get Going. After a day and a half struggle with ice and wind, navigation was resumed last night from Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., as the downbound steamer J. J. SULLIVAN, followed by the CRETE, (RALPH H.) WATSON and the JOLIET moved through the locks. Navigation had been suspended due to a northwest wind that undid the work of icebreakers and moved ships. At 6 p.m., the first three of the upbound ships were able to move. Forty were in a queue awaiting freedom to move but their progress would be slow as the ice in Whitefish Bay shifted uncertainly." On the following day, the same source reported that 75 vessels were held in the St. Mary's River. (Can you imagine being there with a camera?) U.S.C.G. MACKINAW and another icebreaker were having difficulty keeping a channel open, and the Coast Guard ordered the vessels to anchor.

CRETE saved her most serious and deadly accident for last and, once again, fog was a major factor. On Wednesday, June 23rd, 1948, CRETE was upbound light on Lake Superior, while the 1910-built, 580-foot steamer J. P. MORGAN JR., of the Pittsburgh Steamship Company, was downbound with iron ore from Duluth. At about 5:00 a.m., in a position some 135 miles east of Duluth and 30 miles northwest of the western entrance to the Portage Canal, the two ships came violently together almost head-on. The bow of the CRETE cut heavily into the port bow of the MORGAN JR., peeling back the latter's side plating and exposing the interior of the forecabin and deck below, opening up the texas cabin, and pushing the entire bridge structure backward and over toward the starboard side. The MORGAN JR.'s forward compartment was flooded but, even worse, two of her crew were killed and three more were seriously injured. As a result of the fact that, being light, CRETE loomed high over the MORGAN JR., her damage was confined to the lower bow, where her plates and frames were set back some twenty feet.

The ships separated almost immediately after the collision and, in an effort to relocate the MORGAN JR. in the fog, CRETE barely avoided another collision, this with the passing Kinsman Transit steamer HARRY L. FINDLAY. The U.S.C.G. WOODRUSH was sent to the scene from Duluth and, with the assistance of the Corps of Engineers tug BARLOW, the MORGAN JR. was brought into the Portage Canal and secured at Houghton, Michigan. After temporary repairs were made to ensure that she could be towed safely, the MORGAN JR. was taken in tow by the G-tug WYOMING, which took her down to Lorain, where the major repairs needed were put in hand by the American Ship Building Company. Virtually an entire new bow and forward deckhouses had to be constructed on the MORGAN JR., and it was not until September 5, 1948, that the ship was returned to service. CRETE, seriously damaged but in no immediate danger, proceeded under her own power to the shipyard at Superior, Wisconsin, where repairs were completed.

It has been reported that, in terms of the extent of damage, this was the most costly collision that ever occurred on Lake Superior but without any ship being sunk. It also was an accident which never would be forgotten by the masters of the ships involved. An unsourced clipping from the collection of the late Ivan S. Brookes, datelined Cleveland, February 18, 1949, reported: "The United States Coast Guard yesterday suspended for one year the licence of Capt. Stanley Kielbasa, 60, of Chicago, master of the lake steamship CRETE, which was involved in a collision with another American freighter, the J. P. MORGAN JR., on Lake Superior last summer. Capt. F. W. Quinn, master of the MORGAN, also has been charged with negligence. His case comes up later."

Another unsourced Brookes clipping, datelined Grand Rapids, Michigan, November 8, 1949, noted: "Capt. Stanley Kielbasa, 60, of Chicago, pleaded guilty in Federal Court yesterday to negligence in the operation of a Great Lakes freighter involved in a fatal Lake Superior accident June 23, 1948. According to District Attorney Joseph F. Deeb, Kielbasa was skipper of the s.s. CRETE which collided with the s.s. J. P. MORGAN JR., another freighter, in a