

In the Mid-Summer issue, we reported that it had been said that Upper Lakes Shipping had given up on its efforts to see the 1959-built straight-decker SEAWAY QUEEN preserved somewhere on the lakes, and that she had been sold to the same breakers at Alang, India, who recently had acquired MAPLEGLLEN, OAKGLEN and ALGOSOUND. It was not long after we penned that item that our worst fears were confirmed as we saw workers preparing the QUEEN for a tow. Finally, on Wednesday, September 3rd, SEAWAY QUEEN made her final departure from her longtime home port of Toronto in tow of the tugs DOUG McKEIL, VIGILANT 1 and SEAHOUND. On her way down Lake Ontario, the crew aboard the laker obliterated with black paint the vessel's name and all of her old owner's insignia, and looking much more a "dead ship", the QUEEN arrived at Montreal early on September 7th, where she was moored along with the other Alang-bound veterans. Thus ended a significant era, as the original commissioning of SEAWAY QUEEN coincided with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway itself.

The first of the four scrap-bound ships to depart Montreal was MAPLEGLLEN, which was towed out on September 12 by the tug SEAWAYS 2, which had been waiting at Montreal for some time as the tow was prepared. Escorting the tow as far as Les Escoumins, 250 nautical miles down the river, was McKeil's tug PROGRESS. It is said that next to go, in mid-October, will be SEAWAY QUEEN and OAKGLEN, which will be towed singly to Quebec City and then in tandem to Alang behind the tug SEAWAYS 5. That tug left Spain on September 19, bound for Montreal.

Meanwhile, more flatbacks have entered service for the autumn grain rush. After being given her five-year survey and inspection at Port Weller, CANADIAN LEADER went into service during September. Also reactivated was Algoma Central's ALGONORTH, which had been laid up at Montreal. With these two in service, no more reactivations currently are anticipated. It had been thought that CANADIAN RANGER, laid up at Montreal since late 2000, might be returned to service this year, but it now appears that she may be towed to Toronto with a load of sugar for the Redpath plant, and then taken to Hamilton for a refurbishing to ready her for service next season.

One more gearless bulker appears to have operated her last, that being CANADIAN MARINER, idle at Toronto since last autumn. It was widely hoped that she might see service in this fall's grain rush, but it was reported recently that she has been sold to ULS affiliate Trois-Rivieres Elevators for use as a grain storage barge. It is said that she will be towed to Hamilton, where she will be cut down and have her stern notched for pushing by a tug. The same conversion reportedly will be given to CANADIAN TRADER, which currently is at Trois-Rivieres. The TRADER was supposedly sold for scrapping in China in 2001, but to this day she remains in ULS ownership. Currently reduced to a barge and used for grain storage at Trois-Rivieres is BARGE LAVIOLETTE, the former CANADIAN EXPLORER, which is owned by Services Maritimes Laviolette Inc.

The "Erie Times-News" reported on September 21st that the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority has been working on plans for a truck-carrying ferry service across Lake Erie between Erie and Nanticoke, and that it was working with Upper Lakes Shipping to design "a workable plan". The plan currently is to have two 730-foot ferries, each carrying 100 to 150 trucks or trailer loads of cargo, make the 40-mile crossing at a speed of 16 knots. If the ferries are to be 730 feet long, that suggests that more ULS straight-deck bulker hulls might be used, and if they are to run at 16 knots, that makes it likely that powerful tugs would be pushing them. It will be interesting to see whether anything comes of this, and what flatbacks might be chosen for ferry conversion.

Another report from the "Erie Times-News" recently quoted Sandy Smith, vice president and general manager of the Erie Sand & Gravel Company, as saying that the Erie Sand Steamship Company's 1943-built, Maritime class self-unloader has been for sale and that a number of potential buyers have looked