

The 2003 summer in the Great Lakes area was a strange one. The weather was variable (a "nice" word for it) and we were not bothered here in Toronto by much extremely hot weather. However, we did have the major bother of the August 14th power blackout with which to contend just at the hottest part of the season, and also the welter of political blatherings that followed it. And Toronto still was reeling from the unfortunate economic after-effects of the spring's S.A.R.S. situation, rendered far worse for us because of scare-mongering, ill-informed reports in the U.S. press. We were lucky that, at least in this part of the continent, we avoided the wildfires and floods that brought so much tragedy to people of other areas.

Autumn started out pleasantly enough but soon became wet and windy. As these words are being written, your Editor is listening to roaring winds buffeting his little and exposed house on Ward's Island and wondering just when it ever will get dry and calm enough to tarp the canoe for the winter and bring in the wooden garden furniture. Some areas not far from the city already have had nasty dumps of snow, and all this has reminded us that it is time for us to review the 2003 shipping season and to pass along to our members our best wishes for the upcoming holiday season.

The autumn has been extremely blustery. The winds have not caused any marine accidents, unlike as in other Novembers we can recall, but it has had severe effects on water levels as seiches caused problems, especially on Lake Erie and in the St. Mary's River. Ships often have had to anchor because of the winds.

The 2003 navigation season was a strange one, with business generally decent but with the economic situation continuing to cause financial problems for taconite plants and steel producers, and concerns for several shipping companies.

The Oglebay Norton Company found itself in dire straits and its COURTNEY BURTON and BUCKEYE remained idle all year, along with RICHARD REISS of its Erie Sand Division, and ARMCO went into lay-up after only a few spring trips. However, Oglebay Norton's oldest vessel, JOSEPH H. FRANTZ, ran most of the season as she began a five-year charter to Great Lakes Associates (the "Kinsman" fleet). Interlake's idle ELTON HOYT 2nd found new work as (b) MICHIPICOTEN in the Lower Lakes Towing fleet, but the Interlake straight-decker JOHN SHERWIN continued her more than twenty years of idleness at Superior. Central Marine Logistics' EDWARD L. RYERSON remained idle at Sturgeon Bay but again hosted public tours. The grain carrier KINSMAN INDEPENDENT, retired at the end of the 2002 season, remained idle at Buffalo and faces a very uncertain future. GEMINI is now the only major self-propelled tanker sailing the lakes under the U.S. flag as, during the autumn, Cleveland Tankers' SATURN was sold for off-lakes trading.

There was little spring movement of Canadian grain as a result of one of the worst ever Canadian grain harvests in 2002. This was not good for Canadian fleets operating straight-deckers, but a good harvest in 2003 brought a number of idle Canadian bulkers back to service in the fall. Even CANADIAN RANGER, idle since 2000, was reactivated to haul a cargo of sugar from Trois-Rivieres to Toronto, and reportedly will be refitted for a return to active service next year.

There continued to be a major parade of Canadian ships to the breakers, and a number of gearless bulkers are gone forever. Sadly, OAKGLEN, MAPLEGLEN and SEAWAY QUEEN were towed away to scrapyards at Alang, India, and ALGOSOUND was sold for a similar fate but will not depart on her long tow until the spring. CANADIAN VENTURE would have been towed to the International Marine Salvage yard at Port Colborne, except that there is no room for her there at present, with work progressing slowly on ALGOGULF and KINSMAN ENTERPRISE.

A completely surprising scrap sale from the U.S. side involved the 1923-built cement carrier LEWIS G. HARRIMAN, which last operated in 1980 and latterly has been used as a storage barge at Green Bay. A preservation group