

Transport Desgagnes Inc., of Quebec City, has acquired another vessel, apparently for service to Newfoundland. Renamed CAMILLA DESGAGNES, she was registered on February 2nd at St. John's, Nfld., under official number C.825762. She is the former CAMILLA 1, built in 1981 by Kroegerwerft Rendsburg GMBH at Rendsburg, Germany. She is 412.4 x 67.5 x 46.3, 10085 Gross and 3026 Net.

The Rochester - Toronto fast ferry SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1 is now well on her way from Australia, where she was built, to the Great Lakes via the Pacific Ocean and the Panama Canal. But whether a permanent terminal will be ready for the ship at Toronto when she begins service in April is still very much a question mark. The CEO of the Toronto Port Authority was quoted in the press on February 9th as stating that "the terminal will not be done by May" and that a tent will be used to receive passengers! Needless to say, officials of the City of Toronto were not amused. The City and the Port Authority are at loggerheads over many harbour issues, most notable of which is the Authority's now-stalled plan to build a bridge across the Western Gap to the Island Airport (now served by the ferries MAPLE CITY and WINDMILL POINT). Toronto Mayor David Miller, who won a huge majority of the vote in last fall's civic elections, primarily because of opposition to the bridge, has asked the federal government to abolish the Port Authority.

On February 11, the tug SEAWAYS 5 arrived at Alang, India, with the lakers OAKGLEN and SEAWAY QUEEN in tow for scrapping. Unlike the earlier MAPLEGLEN tow, this tow took the longer route around the Cape of Good Hope in order to avoid bad late-autumn weather on the North Atlantic, and because the Suez Canal authorities will not allow two vessels to be towed together through that waterway. After rounding the Cape, however, SEAWAY QUEEN began to experience rivet failure and SEAWAYS 5 had to place heavy-duty pumps aboard the QUEEN to keep her afloat. There are those shipping observers on the lakes who might have wished that SEAWAY QUEEN had been successful in her apparent attempt to avoid the scrappers...

As planned, the U.S.C.G. ALDER, last of 16 Juniper-class, 225-foot buoy tenders, was launched by Marinette Marine on February 7th. The launch went well and the vessel was sponsored by Mrs. Judith Hull. ALDER will be stationed at Duluth and will replace the 1944-built SUNDEW there. The new ship is to be handed over to the Coast Guard on September 2nd.

Another launch, which occurred last autumn, and which should have been reported in these pages but wasn't, was that of the new tanker being built in China for Algoma Tankers. Named ALGOSCOTIA (ii), the double-hulled tanker was launched by the Jiangnan Shipyard on October 29, 2003. The ship will be commissioned this spring and reportedly will replace the 1969-built ALGOFAX, (a) IMPERIAL BEDFORD (97).

In mid-February, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced new security measures to be implemented at the Soo Locks. Closed-circuit cameras formed part of the plan, as did plexiglas enclosures for the viewing platforms, new wrought iron fences from the West Pier all the way along the MacArthur Lock wall to the Corps mooring basin below the lock, and a series of bollards and cables inside the existing perimeter fences. Motion detectors and increased lighting would also be installed. Implementation of the new security features was delayed after the announcement was met with a howl of protest from area merchants and tourist facilities, as well as from shipping observers. It is to be hoped that some compromise can be reached which will satisfy the needs of the local tourist industry (upon which Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, is greatly dependent) as well as security concerns.

Regular ferry service to the Toronto Islands, suspended on January 16 because of severe ice conditions and damage sustained by the engines of the carferry ONGIARA, was resumed on February 24, much to the relief of the Island residents. The City finally gave in and retained the services of McKeil Marine, whose tug ATOMIC broke out a path to Ward's Island.