

The summer in the Great Lakes area was a pleasant but unusual one. It was one of the warmest on record but, at least in the Toronto area, we had very few uncomfortably hot days. The spring and fall both were cool and rather wet. Indeed, the autumn has brought early and heavy snows to many areas of Canada, while the west coast has been deluged with flooding rains. But as we write these words in mid-November, your editor's garden still is blooming beautifully. Even so, it is time for us to review the 2006 shipping season and to pass along to our members our best wishes for the upcoming holiday season.

Generally speaking, the 2006 navigation season was a strong one with lots of cargoes to be moved and this caused the reactivation of several idle lakers. Upper Lakes Shipping refurbished its straight decker CANADIAN PROVIDER and she ran all season, only the fleet's hybrid CANADIAN RANGER remaining idle. And Voyageur Marine Transport purchased and returned to the lakes the ocean-laker LADY HAMILTON (the former SASKATCHEWAN PIONEER), renaming her (c) VOYAGEUR PIONEER. Algoma's self-unloader ALGOBAY again remained idle, apparently awaiting a major reconstruction.

On the U.S. side, the straight decker EDWARD L. RYERSON was reactivated after having been idle since late in 1998, much to the delight of shipwatchers everywhere. The former Oglebay Norton self-unloader BUCKEYE (iii) was reactivated by an affiliate of K & K Warehousing as the barge LEWIS J. KUBER, towed by the yet-again-reborn tug OLIVE L. MOORE, while the same fleet continued to run its RESERVE as a steamer although eventual barge conversion seems inevitable. The Interlake steamer JOHN SHERWIN (ii) moved for the first time since 1981, but in a tow from Superior to Milwaukee and then South Chicago, not for active service. Interlake's LEE A. TREGURTHA returned to service after repowering with diesel machinery. And despite rumpours of "bargification", the 100-year-old cement carrier ST. MARYS CHALLENGER kept chugging along as a steamer, spending most of her time on Lake Michigan.

Perhaps the biggest news of the 2006 season was the final disposition of the Oglebay Norton fleet. The majority of its vessels were sold to an affiliate of the American Steamship Company and were given names beginning with "AMERICAN". They all received A.S.C. stack colours, but hull and cabin painting will await lay-up and/or shipyard visits. The remainder of the ships, the "river class" sisterships DAVID Z. NORTON, EARL W. OGLEBAY and WOLVERINE, were sold later to the Wisconsin and Michigan Steamship Company, which then long-term chartered them, along with existing cargo commitments, to the Lower Lakes/Grand River organization.

International Marine Salvage, of Port Colborne, continued to be active in the shipbreaking business. The remains of JOSEPH H. FRANTZ were dispatched there, and WINDOC (jointly owned by ULS and Algoma) awaits the rumoured removal of her damaged stern section to convert her to a barge. However, the long-idle ore carrier L. E. BLOCK and the canaller D. C. EVEREST both were towed to the yard, with scrapping being their inevitable end. Precious little more "scrappable" tonnage exists on the lakes, with fleets stripped to the bare minimum.

Nevertheless, prospects of any large new commercial ships being built on the lakes for lake trade continue to be poor, although Lafarge did commission its newly-built barge INNOVATION which is handled by the rebuilt tug SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN. The Sturgeon Bay shipyard still has been building petroleum barges for coastal service. The former Davie shipyard at Lauzon finally was sold to foreign buyers and may or may not resume shipbuilding activities. The worst news, however, is that Canadian Shipbuilding and Engineering has abandoned efforts to reorganize (after taking on some unfortunate contracts for salty construction at Port Weller) and has decided to close its business and seek buyers for both its Pascol yard at Thunder Bay and the Port Weller Dry Docks operation. What the future holds for these last remaining major Canadian lake shipyards is anyone's guess. But something will have to be done soon, as vessels will continue to need repairs and will come due for drydocking for routine survey and inspection.

The fast ferry LAKE EXPRESS continued crossing Lake Michigan between Muskegon and Milwaukee while SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1, a victim of mismanagement and political whim, has remained idle at Rochester and may well spend the winter there while a buyer actually able to write cheques is sought. Still, reports continue to circulate concerning the possibility of new ferry services in various places around the lakes.

It gives us much pleasure to extend our thanks to all who have supported the Toronto Marine Historical Society during 2006. We include the members of the Executive Committee who have attended to the operation of the Society and chaired our entertainment meetings; the members who are our regular correspondents and contributors to "Scanner" and without whose