

MARINE NEWS

The financial problems of Canadian Shipbuilding and Engineering Inc. have yet to be resolved and the court has approved an extension to its protection from bankruptcy until March 30. The Port Weller shipyard, from whence the problems seem to stem (re the building of vessels for saltwater use), has remained idle and, for the first time in many years, no ships are wintering there for repairs or inspection. The Pascol Engineering shipyard at Thunder Bay, however, continues to function and three Algoma Central ships are undergoing winter work there. Despite the "no news" reports, however, we fully expect buyers to step forward for both yards, as their continued operation is absolutely essential to the Canadian lake fleet.

During the month of January, the 1969-built, single-hulled Algoma Central tanker ALGO NOVA, (a) TEXACO CHIEF (ii)(86), (b) A. G. FARQUHARSON (98), was sold to foreign owners while lying at Halifax. Renamed (d) PACIFICO TRADER, and flying the flag of Panama, she left the Halifax Shipyard on January 27, bound for Cartagena, Colombia. She was a well-known lake trader for many years and was a very handsome ship with decent lines, but her career in Canadian waters was soon to end as she was single-hulled. She was a product of Collingwood Shipyards. We wish her many years of continued service, albeit far from the Great Lakes.

In an earlier issue, we noted that the Sarnia excursion boat DUC D'ORLEANS, a wooden-hulled former wartime-built Fairmile, had been replaced by DUC D'ORLEANS II, brought in from salt water. Now comes word that the older vessel has been donated by her owners to a non-profit partnership formed by the Port of Sarnia and the Sarnia Sea Cadets to restore the historic vessel to her original state (as QO 105) to be displayed on the Sarnia waterfront. It is to be hoped that the efforts to preserve the 1943-built Fairmile will be successful.

The locks of the St. Mary's Falls Canal at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, closed for the year very early on the morning of January 16th, 2007. Departing downbound were two fleetmates, JOSEPH L. BLOCK departing at about 1:00 a.m., while the handsome and much admired straight-deck steamer EDWARD L. RYERSON was the last passage, clearing the locks downbound at 2:20 a.m. The last commercial upbound passage was made by the Purvis Marine tug AVENGER IV on January 15. At last report, JOSEPH L. BLOCK still was running ore out of Escanaba, while the RYERSON went into lay-up at Sturgeon Bay on January 20. Things look good for the RYERSON, idle eight years before her reactivation in 2006, to run again in 2007.

It would appear that the career in Canadian waters of MATHILDA DESGAGNES, (a) ESKIMO (80), the 1959-built former C.S.L. package freighter, has finally come to an end, after a brief reactivation by Transport Desgagnes Inc. in 2006. Laid up at Montreal, her Canadian registry was closed on December 28, 2006, although her new owner has yet to be identified.

We certainly have had our hands full recently trying to keep up with name and ownership changes within the growing McKeil fleet. Two of the tugs the fleet acquired recently, namely the 1961-built POINT VIBERT and POINT VIGOUR, originally FOUNDATION VIBERT and FOUNDATION VIGOUR, have been rechristened FLORENCE M. and MOLLY M., respectively. McKeil purchased these tugs on the east coast, but they were well known for their canal tows of old lakers bound for European scrapyards in the 1960s. Another sister-tug, POINT VALOUR, still does harbour towing at Thunder Bay.

The winter lay-up fleet at Toronto this year is the smallest in recent memory. Although several shiploads of raw sugar were dumped on the west side of Pier 51 before the end of the navigation season (and we'll bet there's a pretty large rat and mouse population now under the tarps over that sugar), there are only three ships with storage cargoes for the Tate & Lyle (Redpath) plant - namely CANADIAN PROVIDER, CANADIAN MINER and CANADIAN LEADER. We had thought that ALGOSTEEL would lay up here, having arrived with a sugar cargo in late December, but she unloaded quickly and headed upbound to winter at Owen Sound. CANADIAN RANGER, idle throughout the 2006 season, continues to lie light ship on the west face of Pier 35. ALGOBAY, idle since 2002, continues to lie at the old Texaco dock on the Ship Channel, just inside the south Cherry Street bridge, but it is said that parts are being stripped out of this 1978 Collingwood-built stemwinder self-unloader. Barring a major reconstruction, she is not likely to operate again. Other Toronto winter denizens are the cement carriers STEPHEN B. ROMAN and barge METIS, of the Essroc fleet, and ENGLISH RIVER, which runs for the Lafarge organization. This is a far cry from the wintering fleets of 40 to 50 ships that used to be recorded in Toronto back when the various grain elevators still were operating and Toronto had a "real port".