

While we are on the subject of Rochester, we should note that the city is still doing its best to divest itself of the fast ferry SPIRIT OF ONTARIO I. On February 27, the ferry, which was "spirited" out of Lake Ontario before the canals closed for the winter, was moved from her lay-up berth at Halifax to Shelburne, Nova Scotia. Since then, the city seems to have given up on its efforts to peddle the ferry to Euroferries Ltd., which for some reason has been unable to come up with the financing necessary to complete the purchase of the ferry. Other buyers for the ferry now are being courted by the city, but officials have declined to identify other prospective buyers.

There has been both good news and bad news in 2007 for Port Weller Dry Docks. The yard was idled by the bankruptcy of Canadian Shipbuilding & Engineering in 2006 after its attempts to build salties for foreign owners foundered, although Pascol Engineering at Thunder Bay, owned by the same interests, kept operating. It was announced on March 6 that the Upper Lakes Group had purchased the Port Weller shipyard and would return it to operation as Seaway Marine and Industrial Inc. Upper Lakes also acquired the Pascol yard at Thunder Bay.

However, during the afternoon of March 13th, while yard clean-up was being done by RMS Richter Inc., the trustee in bankruptcy, the shipyard's 130-foot Clyde jib crane (the one that had been brought down from Collingwood after the shipyard there had closed), began to rock while lifting a heavy load in high winds, and eventually the crane collapsed backwards into the main drydock and the graving dock. The unfortunate operator of the crane, Mike Damiano, was killed when the crane fell, and it took several days before his body could be extracted from the wreckage. The collapsed steelwork had to be stabilized before the Ontario Ministry of Labour would permit the body to be removed. The shipyard has other cranes, but it will be interesting to see how the shipyard will handle any heavy lifts without the big Clyde crane.

It was announced on March 6 that Rand Logistics Inc., parent firm of Lower Lakes Towing and Grand River Navigation, had purchased outright the fleet's self-unloader MANISTEE from a subsidiary of the Sand Products Corporation, from which the ship earlier had been leased. The vessel, formerly Erie Sand's RICHARD REISS, was built in 1943. The cost of Rand's purchase of the MANISTEE was \$2.2 million, and was financed through debt with its existing lender, the GE Capital Corporation.

Meanwhile, the three Lower Lakes / Grand River "river class" self-unloaders, acquired last year by Sand Products from Oglebay Norton, are operating in 2007 but without major repainting to date. However, EARL W. OGLEBAY is now named EARL W. and DAVID Z. NORTON is running as DAVID Z. It is not yet known how long these "interim" names will last, or what names finally will be chosen for them and for their former Oglebay Norton fleetmate, WOLVERINE.

In the March issue, we noted that the Interlake Steamship Company's 1959-built steamer CHARLES M BEEGLY, (a) SHENANGO II (67), had been renamed (c) HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR to honour the U.S. Representative (D) from Minnesota. However, our issue was not even back from the printer when we found out that the name change had been cancelled. Apparently, Mr. Oberstar, as chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, felt it to be inappropriate for a lake shipping company to name a vessel for him. As a result, the OBERSTAR name, which had been painted on the vessel during her winter lay-up at Sturgeon Bay, was painted out and the CHARLES M. BEEGLY name was again reapplied. We cannot recall another situation like this occurring within recent years!

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Have you sent in your bids for the Silent Auction yet? We really need your support, so please check the list on www.tmhs.ca and contact Gordon Turner before April 15th. Thank you.

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