

It has been a great year for weather around the Great Lakes. Good for shipwatching! And the autumn, at least in the Toronto area, has been mostly warm and relatively dry. But as your Editor writes these lines, it has turned frigid and we are having our first snowstorm of the "winter". And to think that our garden was blooming so happily less than a week ago! Oh well... it does put us in the right mind to pen this annual year-in-review column.

The ships on both sides of the lakes ran hard most of the year, and even the Canadian grain boats had a busy summer. Even CANADIAN RANGER was reactivated. Of course, part of this is because low water levels have been restricting loading drafts, and many ports have encountered access problems due to sandbars. Dredging funds are very hard to come by, especially on the U.S. side where politics seem more important in Washington than the essential and immediate needs of commerce.

No new ships were built on the lakes, except for tank barges at Sturgeon Bay, but at least the shipyard at Port Weller reopened under Upper Lakes Group ownership. Algoma Central has been buying tankers abroad and will be having more built, and will have new forward sections built overseas for two of its lake self-unloaders. Its ALGOVILLE went back into service this fall with new engines. However, there still is little likelihood of any large new lakers being built at lake yards. And all the while, the lake fleet is aging rapidly!

We "may" have moved one step closer to having a new large lock built at the Soo; we won't be holding our breath waiting for construction to begin, however.

Turkish scrappers took AQUARAMA / MARINE STAR this summer, as well as CANADIAN MARINER. International Marine Salvage continued scrapping things at Port Colborne, and NINDAWAYMA went to the Soo for scrapping by Purvis. Two lakers were taken out of active service during the season - RESERVE to be made over into a barge, and the venerable CALUMET for scrapping at Port Colborne after a late-season encounter with a dock at Cleveland. However, on the positive side, EDWARD L. RYERSON, the last U.S. straight-deck bulker, has run again in 2007 and even made four trips down through the Seaway, showing off her beautiful lines and chimed tyfons to people who never before had seen her in person. Long may she sail!

It gives us great pleasure to extend our sincere thanks to all who have supported the Toronto Marine Historical Society during 2007. 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 help we could not produce this newsletter at all; those who answered our call for lay-up listings; those who delivered "Scanner" in their local areas and saved us postage; those who contributed historical items for sale for the benefit of T.M.H.S. and those who bought them; those who put on entertainment programmes for us and those who attended them, and all the many who supported us with their continued membership. Your Editor is so very pleased to be part of such a wonderful group and appreciates your encouragement in his 39th year of "Scanner" production.

And now it is time to pass along to you those same words which we say every year at this time. Repetitive they may be, and even unimaginative, but they come from the heart and mean so very much. We can think of no better way to speak of the coming of Christmas and of our inevitable passage into a new year. We are saddened that several of our old friends are no longer here with us to make that passage, but we know that they have safely "crossed the bar" to a better place and await us there.

A number of our members are closely associated with the lake shipping industry. It is our hope that the 2007 navigation season was for them as pleasant, safe and profitable as possible. We wish for all of our sailors, vessel operators and marine historians the very best for 2008.

But now, as our memories of summertime fade away; as the days grow shorter and the skies and waters of our Great Lakes take on the grey pallor of winter; as we work to secure the insulation that we hope will keep the nasty weather on the outside; as the winds rage and the blowing snows obscure the horizons, and as the "smoke" rises from the waters into the cold air, the lake ships scurry to collect and deliver their last cargoes of the year before they seek the calm and safety of winter quarters in snug ports. We wish them all safe passage.

And to all of the members of our large chosen family, the Toronto Marine Historical Society, we extend to all of you our very best wishes for a very Merry Christmas and for all