

On June 20, the Shell Canada fuel dock on the St. Clair River at Corunna was struck by the C.S.L. bulker SPRUCEGLEN and damage was done to the north end of the dock. Transport Canada investigated the incident but declined to lay any charges, saying that fog had been a factor in the incident. Damage was not as severe as back in November of 2006 when the wharf was struck by JOHN G. MUNSON.

Fincantieri, an Italian shipbuilder, has agreed to purchase the Manitowoc Marine Group (which includes Marinette Marine Corporation and Bay Shipbuilding Company) from The Manitowoc Company for some \$120 million, with the deal to close at the end of the year. Fincantieri is looking to invest in the modernization of both Lake Michigan shipyards. Marinette Marine has just completed its first Littoral Combat Ship, U.S.S. FREEDOM, which left the yard on July 28 for trials.

During May, the Erie Shipbuilding Company began construction of a 135-foot tug which will be paired with a 740-foot barge whose building commences this summer. The pair will be completed late in 2009 and will operate in lake bulk trades. It is assumed that the barge will be similar to the similar-sized GREAT LAKES TRADER, which was built in Mississippi in 2000 for the VanEnkevort interests. The exact name of the company that will own the articulated tug-barge combination has not yet been revealed.

The first vessel to be owned by Great Lakes Feeder Lines ULC, of Calgary, Alberta, is the 75.30 metre long, heavy-lift DUTCH RUNNER, built in Germany in 1988 and registered at Quebec on April 22 (C.832444). Despite its official Calgary address, Great Lakes Feeder Lines is operating from Hamilton. DUTCH RUNNER was upbound in the Seaway on July 14 on her first lake trip. After loading boilers at Port Weller, she was at Toronto July 18 loading containers before heading back down the canals.

A number of Canadian lake operators have recently added U.S.-built barges to their fleets. In the spring, Purvis Marine Ltd., of the Soo, acquired two from Andrie Inc. They are the 150-foot CANDACE ANDRIE, (a) MCD (73), (b) MINNESOTA (88), built in 1958 at South Chicago, and the 140-foot MEREDITH ANDRIE, (a) ILLINOIS (02), built in 1971 at St. Paul, Minnesota. The sale of the two was arranged through Marcon Ship Brokers. We are not yet aware of any renames.

On July 30 at Hamilton, McKeil Work Boats Limited registered the 340-foot barge NIAGARA SPIRIT (C.832945), 2770 Net Tons. This big barge was built in 1984 at Portland, Oregon, as (a) ALASKA TRADER (U.S.666611). The tanker went through a number of hands, becoming (b) TIMBERJACK in 1999, apparently converted to a deck barge. We have no idea what McKeil is going to do with her.

And on August 8, McNally Construction Inc. registered at Hamilton the barge F. R. McQUEEN (C.197722). She is of 179.69 Net Tons and was built in 1959 at Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

Back in March, the City of Rochester and the Toronto Port Authority requested proposals for yet another attempt at running a fast ferry service across Lake Ontario between Toronto and Rochester. Two proposals were received. Hover Transit Services wanted to run a 400-passenger hovercraft to be brought from the English Channel. And a concern known as Sevstars proposed running an 80-passenger "sea-skimmer". According to the mayor of Rochester, neither proposal "exhibited the organizational capacity or fiscal wherewithal necessary to proceed", and so neither proposal has been pursued. Both Rochester and the T.P.A. claim to be interested in finding some qualified operator, as both cities have expensively-built ferry terminal facilities currently sitting unused.

Rochester is, however, getting the dredging of the Genesee River that it had needed to permit STEPHEN B. ROMAN to deliver cement there. The work is being done by Ryba Marine Construction Company, Cheboygan, under contract to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

For those of you who have been wondering, there still appears to be hope for the continued operation of the venerable sternwheel passenger steamer DELTA QUEEN, whose current Congressional exemption to S.O.L.A.S. expires in November. On August 2, Ohio Senator George Voinovich announced that after Labor Day, he will propose legislation to renew the exemption, and that he will soon reveal details. There is considerable support amongst politicians and the public for such a move, but a House measure to provide the exemption has been stalled in the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, whose chairman strongly opposes the historic steamer's operation. We can but hope for the best.