



# NORTH STAR PORT

SPRING 2023

**CEMENT SHORTAGE EASING?  
FIRST SHIP SETS RECORD  
1948: RAILROADS RALLY & ROIL**



A PUBLICATION OF THE



**Duluth Seaway  
Port Authority**

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# THE HARBOR LINE

For the first time in practical or archival memory, the Port of Duluth-Superior will offer a regular trans-Atlantic liner service connecting North America's furthest-inland seaport with Antwerp, Belgium. More specifically, the Dutch shipping company Spliethoff will provide ships for the dedicated monthly liner service that will carry breakbulk, project and container cargoes, plus special bulk cargo arrangements, between the Duluth Seaway Port Authority's Clure Public Marine Terminal, featuring Duluth Cargo Connect services, and Antwerp, which is a major gateway to markets in Europe and beyond.

The service will offer short transit times of 20–25 days and reduced costs to importers and exporters located in our region and well beyond. The first vessel arrived at the Duluth Cargo Connect facilities on May 13. With this first vessel, we handled import cargoes that will be delivered as far as the Pacific Northwest and export cargoes coming from as far away as Calgary, Alberta, representing a remarkable catchment area.

This is a moment and a development to savor. The Port Authority's sequential, strategic investments in the Clure Terminal have resulted in a stage that makes this service a possibility. Duluth Cargo Connect's deep relationships and reputation for excellence within the shipping industry and with regional businesses, coupled with Spliethoff's vision and willingness to partner, makes the performance on that stage a reality.

This service is unique, groundbreaking and meaningful to this region in so many ways, and I have limited space, so I've bulleted them in broad strokes:

- Spliethoff allows for “parceling” the vessel, which means it can be filled with mixed cargoes from multiple shippers with no minimal tonnage requirement. Shippers needn't commit to filling an entire ship to get their goods to market. In the trucking world, this is similar to less-than-truckload service. It makes shipping by water from the middle of the continent economical for smaller shippers.
- Spliethoff has its own pool of containers; their availability should mitigate container supply challenges.
- The regular sailing schedule means predictability for shippers. Shippers can plan delivery of their cargoes to our terminal around this schedule and know they can count on uncongested access via road or rail to do so. One early-adopter, Chippewa Valley Bean Company, called it

a “game-changer” for their export business.

- Duluth Cargo Connect's package of customized value-add services (for example, container stuffing/de-stuffing, crating, skidding, bundling, etc.), warehousing capability and high-touch customer interaction coupled with Spliethoff's regular sailings and that uncongested access translates to bespoke supply chain solutions for shippers that cannot be matched by the large coastal ports due to the scale of their operations.
  - Sailing these cargoes to and from Duluth maximizes the waterborne leg of the journey, which significantly reduces carbon emissions and land-based congestion, so this is a win from an environmental standpoint. In fact, sailing these cargoes across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System (instead of trucking them to an East Coast port, based on a Twin Ports origin) will result in a 56% (!) emission savings, according to recent work completed by CPCS.
  - Building on to Cleveland's existing regular liner service with Spliethoff, the Duluth-Superior service helps grow critical mass, increasing visibility and familiarity with the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway as a viable alternative to get cargoes into and beyond the Midwest.
- Will this route always be the cheapest and fastest choice? The answer is sometimes. It all depends upon each shipper's unique circumstances. Supply chain and logistics moves are complicated, involving many segments and components. The type of cargo, weight limits for connecting modes, container supply, origin and destination are all variables in each logistics scenario. From within this matrix, our new service will emerge as the best-fit solution for many, and we plan on optimizing that development.



Deb DeLuca, Port Director

The Duluth Cargo Connect team unloads an innovative German tractor from the UAL *Fortitude* on the evening of May 13, 2023. The tractor was one of several import cargoes sailing to Duluth's Clure Public Marine Terminal on board the first of Spliethoff's monthly Antwerp-Duluth liner service vessels.



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**About North Star Port**

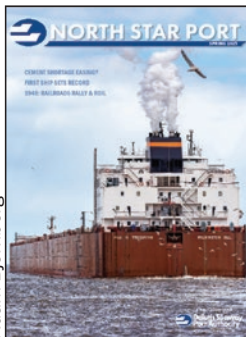
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Jayson Hron

The team from Duluth Cargo Connect unloads containerized cargo from the UAL *Fortitude* at the Clure Public Marine Terminal on May 13, 2023. It represented the first call at Duluth from Spliethoff's new trans-Atlantic liner service connecting Duluth and Antwerp, Belgium.

Adam Bjornberg



**On the front:** The *Paul R. Tregurtha*, Queen of the Lakes at 1,013.5 feet in length, sails from the Port of Duluth-Superior with a flock of gulls in her wake. The ship's features include the expected—an efficient unloading boom—and the unexpected: an elevator for captain, crew and guests.

**On the back:** The 1927-built tugboat *Missouri* of the Great Lakes Towing Company cuts a track through drift ice in the Port of Duluth-Superior on April 2, 2023. In the distance, 2013-built *Baie Comeau* of Canada Steamship Lines navigates her departure from Duluth.

Paul Scinocca



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# Autumn cement shortage curbs progress on some local projects

## What's the road ahead?

### *Port expecting strong season for maritime cement shipments*

BY JULIE ZENNER

There is one concrete fact known by everyone who works in a cold-climate construction industry: the need to wrap up key aspects of any project before winter. Pouring and finishing concrete work itself is particularly urgent. That's why a cement shortage last fall rattled some area contractors and property owners right down to their foundations.

"Fall is our busiest season," said Jon Carlson, project manager and estimator for Northland Constructors of Duluth, Inc. (Northland). "Concrete curbs, gutters, sidewalks and pavements are some of the last things to get done each year, after utilities are put in and gradings are complete."

In late September or early October 2022, Northland began to get calls that local ready-mix suppliers were facing allocations of cement, a core ingredient in concrete, and that it might affect what contractors would be able to order on a daily basis. Carlson had worked with concrete for years, on both the supply and demand sides of the aisle. He had heard rumors of cement shortages in the past that never quite came to fruition—this time, it was real.

The timing could not have been worse. Northland had multiple projects underway that required major amounts of concrete, including subcontracting work on the Twin Ports Interchange, curbs and sidewalks for a housing development in Cloquet, and a number of driveway projects and sidewalk sections in Duluth. It became a scramble to find and secure ma-

The *Federal Dart* arrived March 28 at the CRH/Ash Grove cement terminal in Duluth as the port's first oceangoing ship of the 2023 navigation season. Port officials expect 2023 to be a very good year for cement shipments into Duluth-Superior.

terial, prioritize projects and keep clients informed of the situation.

“We were having multiple conversations with local ready-mix suppliers every day to see who was going to be able to get us what we needed. They were trying to keep up with demand by calling everywhere and scrounging up anything they could get. Then we would schedule our day based on where we’d be able to keep progress moving,” Carlson said. “Winter was fast approaching. We had a number of jobs that were affected, and we definitely had to work with owners to explain the issues and that delays were outside of our control.”

Dean Lembke, director of building and facilities for the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, heard the same alerts about cement shortages last fall. They came just as concrete work was beginning on footings and foundations for the Clure Public Marine Terminal’s East Annex expansion, a 56,000-square-foot addition to Duluth Cargo Connect’s rail-served warehouse on Rice’s Point. Duluth Cargo Connect is a partnership between the Port Authority and its terminal operator, Lake Superior Warehousing, Inc.

“Our contractor, HMI (a Duluth-based company that specializes in structural concrete work), was put on an allocation of no more than 300 yards of concrete per week, or about 30 truck-loads,” Lembke said. “That wasn’t just for our project, but for their entire company! They diverted concrete from other projects to ours because we were on a timeline and had to maintain our schedule, but it was very tight.”

A separate sidewalk project on Port Authority property

was delayed until spring due to the cement shortage and need to divert all available concrete to the East Annex expansion.

Port officials heard that some local suppliers and contractors turned to cement docks in the Twin Cities to make up shortfalls, but when Mississippi River water levels dropped and barges couldn’t navigate freely, metro cement terminals cut off out-of-town requests.

Cement is a major commodity that moves through the Port of Duluth-Superior. There are two cement terminals on the Twin Ports’ industrial waterfront: CRH/Ash Grove Terminal in Duluth and LaFarge Holcim Cement Terminal in Superior. Cargo statistics show 188,541 short tons of cement arrived in the Twin Ports via ship during the 2022 shipping season. That was well below the 2021 season total of 276,583 short tons (a massive year for cement shipments) but nearly six percent above the five-year average.

The Portland Cement Association (PCA), a policy, research, education and market intelligence organization that serves America’s cement manufacturers, tracks market conditions. For the past two years, PCA has regularly surveyed its members about supply chain issues in the wake of COVID-19. It turns out cement shortages were felt nationwide last year.

“Last fall, we did (a member survey), and every single state reported the condition of market tightness was present,” said Ed Sullivan, senior vice president and chief economist for PCA, noting that a follow-up survey this spring found 40 states reporting tight market conditions.

**Cement** continued on Page 16



The Lafarge Holcim cement terminal in Superior, Wisconsin, photographed here in May 2021, is one of two cement terminals in the Port of Duluth-Superior (the other is CRH/Ash Grove in Duluth). The vessel J.A.W. Iglehart is permanently docked at the Lafarge Holcim terminal for increased cement storage. The two terminals provide cement for a massive inland distribution region stretching as far as Alberta, Canada.



# Peeking into the 2023 navigation season with Duluth's first family of freighter sailing



BY STEPHANIE JUDD IRWIN

With shipping season upon us, we asked Captain Dan Rentschler and his son, Ethan, an oiler/qualified member of engine department (QMED), to provide some background into the pilotage career, insight into new trends in the shipping industry for this coming season, as well as share a glimpse into their day-to-day work on the Great Lakes.

The United States pilotage service on the Great Lakes is divided into three groups who work in partnership with the Canadian Great Lakes Pilotage Authority, to provide safe pilotage of saltwater vessels from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Duluth. The Western Great Lakes Pilots Association (WGLPA) is responsible for providing pilotage service in District 3, which encompasses Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, and the St. Marys River. Geographically, District 3 is the largest pilotage district in the system. Currently, there are 21 federally registered U.S. pilots and four Canadian pilots, and they work on either side of the border depending on who is next in the duty roster. The U.S. pilots work a 20-day-on/10-day-off rotation through the regular navigation season. The occasional job in the winter season is covered by volunteers, and this past season there were approximately six of those winter assignments. A Duluthian, Captain Dan took one of them and sailed a tanker round trip from Port Huron, Michigan, to Green Bay, Wisconsin. During this time, the Soo Locks are closed but limited commerce still takes place elsewhere throughout the lakes.

The WGLPA provides 24/7 dispatch service to both the U.S. and Canadian partners, provides pilot boat services (to deliver the pilots to the oceangoing vessels), and also

provides a fleet of cars to transport pilots to and from assignments. According to Captain Rentschler, the logistics of making these arrangements can be challenging, since many of the ports in District 3, both U.S. and Canadian, have inadequate or nonexistent public transportation.

In terms of new developments for the WGLPA, leadership changed in March 2023, with the election of Christopher Edyvean of Ironwood, Michigan, as president. The outgoing president, Jon Olney, is due to retire soon after the start of the regular navigation season. The association moved its administrative office from Brimley, Michigan, to a larger office in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. The Brimley property continues to be the base of pilot boat operations for the upper St. Marys River, with the pilot boat base at the lower part of the river remaining in Detour, Michigan.

For 2023, Captain Rentschler predicts similar traffic patterns compared to 2022, though with an increase in cruise ship traffic. Viking Cruises will be making four turnaround stops in Duluth. Three turnaround stops are scheduled for the new *Viking Polaris* and one for the *Viking Octantis*.

“Duluth is a good port for the cruise ships to make a turnaround stop because of the existing infrastructure and ease of communication with the rest of the world,” said Captain Rentschler. “The city also has much to offer as a destination port of call.”

Looking beyond cruising, Captain Rentschler also noted that grain and fertilizer shipments worldwide will be impacted by the conflict in the Ukraine, but it's difficult to predict the result on grain shipping from Duluth-Superior.



The *Federal Dart* arrives as the first oceangoing ship of 2023. Captain Dan Rentschler helped pilot the vessel from Port Huron to the Soo Locks.

Whatever happens, Rentschler will be working anywhere between Port Huron, Chicago and Duluth. With the increased cruise ship traffic, he expects to spend some time piloting the beautiful North Channel and Georgian Bay of Lake Huron. He feels very fortunate to work in places of such natural beauty, and said, “the only thing that rivals this joy is making a difficult ship-handling maneuver look easy. The best compliment I can get is to hear a line handler tell me ‘Nice job, Captain!’ That really makes my day.”

Captain Rentschler’s first assignment of the 2023 season was piloting the *Federal Dart* from Port Huron to the Soo Locks. From there, the *Federal Dart* journeyed onward to Duluth, becoming the season’s first saltie arrival and the earliest ever by an oceangoing vessel in the Port of Duluth-Superior.

As a pilot aboard these salties, Captain Rentschler has the opportunity to work with crews of different nations. The cuisine aboard the ship reflects the nationality and culture of the crew.

“We often share stories about our homes and families,” he said. “I show them pictures of Duluth in the winter and they show me pictures of gardens at home.”

These crews often can’t get off the ship due to work schedules or lack of visas, so their work family is often all they have during their time on board. However, the local vessel agent, and the Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers, can arrange to supply SIM cards to crew members so that they can communicate with family back home. It is not uncommon for crew contracts to last nine months. During the pandemic, these contracts were extended sometimes over 12 months. The non-profit Seafarers Center located

in Duluth (learn more at [seafarerstwinports.org](http://seafarerstwinports.org)) is a great resource during these lengthy assignments, offering assistance to crew members of all religious, ethnic, and national backgrounds. Captain Rentschler states that some of these crews come from tropical climates and are not prepared for the cooler Duluth weather.

“A jacket or pair of gloves can make a big difference in someone’s life,” said Rentschler, and items like this can be provided free-of-charge by the Seafarers Center, which survives largely on financial donations and contributions.

For the Rentschlers, a career in the maritime industry also happens to be a family affair. Captain Rentschler’s son, Ethan, started his career last season as a fourth-generation Great Lakes seaman, two days after his high school graduation, as a wiper on the *Wilfred Sykes*. A wiper is an entry-level position in the engineering department. Ethan accumulated enough sea time to be eligible to attend school and take the U.S. Coast Guard exam to upgrade his credentials to oiler/QMED and will be working this season for Central Marine Logistics (CML), which currently operates the *Joseph L. Block* and the *Wilfred Sykes*. The *Block* is a frequent visitor to the Twin Ports, often delivering stone and then loading taconite pellets for the steel mills in northern Indiana. The steamer *Wilfred Sykes* often loads stone at various Michigan ports used in the steelmaking process. Once Ethan attains the required amount of sea time on his current certificate, he plans to take the exam for third assistant engineer, unlimited horse power, with a steam endorsement. Ethan became interest-

**Navigation Season** continued on Page 10



MAIN: Fednav's *Federal Dart* sailed beneath Duluth's Aerial Lift Bridge on March 28, 2023, at 3:30 p.m., entering the inner harbor as the Port of Duluth-Superior's earliest-arriving first saltie on record.

LEFT: Anuvarat Arora of India, shipmaster of the Marshall Islands-flagged *Federal Dart*.

## FIRSTS OF THE 2023-2024 SEASON

Notable	Ship Name	Built	Company or Country	Departure Date	Time
First laker out	<i>Lee A. Tregurtha</i>	1980	Interlake Steamship Company	March 23, 2023	9:22 a.m.
First laker in (Soo Locks)	<i>Joseph L. Block</i>	1952	Central Marine Logistics	March 26, 2023	9 a.m.
First Canadian in	<i>CSL St-Laurent</i>	1980	Canadian Steamship Lines	March 27, 2023	5:36 p.m.
First saltie in (full Seaway transit)	<i>Federal Dart</i>	2010	Fednav	March 28, 2023 *Earliest on record	3:30 p.m.



### Cement shipment becomes Duluth's earliest oceangoing arrival on record

Arriving March 28 at 3:30 p.m. under Duluth's Aerial Lift Bridge, the *Federal Dart* from Fednav Limited became the earliest-arriving oceangoing vessel on record in the Port of Duluth-Superior, which opens to commercial shipping each year in concert with the Soo Locks' opening on March 25. The previous early-arrival record belonged to another Fednav vessel, *Federal Hunter*, which arrived March 30, 2013.

Carrying approximately 23,000 short tons of Turkish cement, *Federal Dart* made the trans-Atlantic journey to North America's furthest-inland seaport in 25 days, ultimately docking at Duluth's CRH/Ash Grove Cement Terminal.

"The Atlantic was quite good. It was not that rough, which it normally is in winters,

**Season Kickoff** continued on Page 11



## Navigation Season Continued from Page 7

ed in the maritime industry at an early age after going aboard ships with his dad and hearing stories from his grandfather's days sailing. One of his fondest memories was when a family friend who worked as a chief engineer let him start the massive main engine on a lake freighter when he was only 8 years old. Throughout high school, Ethan garnered experience working aboard tugboats owned by Heritage Marine. His first assignment this season was on the *Block*, when that vessel became the first laker to arrive to Duluth, on March 26. His mother, aunt, cousin and friends were all in Canal Park to welcome him into port, and it was an extra special arrival, being that the ships both he and his dad sailed were the first laker and saltie arrivals of the season, respectively, to the Twin Ports.


The family affair extends beyond father and son. The story of how Captain Rentschler met his eventual wife, Sarah, also was, not surprisingly, rooted



Sarah and Dan Rentschler



in the maritime industry. The two met aboard the *Roger Blough* in the 1990s when Sarah worked as a passenger porter and he a second mate. She applied for a Merchant Marine Document upon turning 18, and during her time sailing on the *Blough*, became friends with Dan, which led to their relationship during her second year of sailing and marriage that subsequently followed. In addition to Ethan, Dan and Sarah also have a daughter, Gretchen.

Captain Dan and Ethan's favorite aspects of their careers include working with machines and "old-school" mechanics, which for them, feels like a step back to World War II technology. They both respect the way things were done in the past, appreciate the beauty of the Great Lakes, and enjoy working with a variety of people from various backgrounds. The most challenging aspect for both is being away from home and family and frequently needing to improvise or make important decisions quickly. However, they're both up to the challenge and look forward to the 2023 shipping season. 



TOP LEFT: Duluth-Superior's first outbound vessel of the 2023 navigation season was the *Lee A. Tregurtha*, departing in ballast for Marquette, Michigan, to load iron ore after spending the winter at Fraser Shipyards.


RIGHT: First to pass through the Soo Locks and arrive in Duluth this spring, the *Joseph L. Block*, bound for the CN iron ore docks.

Photos by David Schauer



## Season Kickoff Continued from Page 9

so we had a smooth passage all the way,” said Captain Anuvarat Arora of India, shipmaster of the Marshall Islands-flagged *Federal Dart*. Arora also praised the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System’s hands-free mooring technology for expediting passage to Duluth, along with the comparatively low ice coverage on Lake Superior.

The Duluth Seaway Port Authority feted Arora and his crew in a March 30 welcoming ceremony, which also included the announcement of the port’s 40th anniversary First Ship contest winner, Patricia Miranda. Her arrival guess—one of 9,273 submitted during the 2023 contest—was a mere two minutes off the vessel’s actual arrival date and time. Miranda’s winning guess earned her an epic prize package from Visit Duluth. 

BOTTOM LEFT: The Great Lakes’ first thousand-footer, the *Stewart J. Cort*, built in 1972, docks briefly at the Clure Public Marine Terminal on April 3, 2023, while the lakes’ newest thousand-footer, the *Paul R. Tregurtha*, built in 1981, sails past in the background.

Seasons of Yore: 1948

# U.S. navigates train triumphs and tribulations

BY JAYSON HRON

Seventy-five years ago this May, America fixed its focus on the railroad with an intensity unmatched since Leland Stanford struck the golden spike in May 1869.

The object of its collective focus, initially, was a gleaming white 2,000-horsepower diesel-electric locomotive striped in red, white and blue. Seven matching railcars trailed this patriotic power plant, the “Spirit of 1776,” as it crossed the nation on a mission to reinvigorate Americanism.

Known as the Freedom Train, it contained original versions of the United States Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights and the Truman Doctrine. It also included expositions on good citizenship and American freedoms. A staff of 41, including a contingent of Marines, traveled with the rolling exhibit on a parade that eventually reached more than 3 million people in 300 cities across 48 states. Notably, that cavalcade did not include Memphis, Tennessee, and Birmingham, Alabama. The American Heritage Foundation, which orchestrated the Freedom Train, canceled visits to both, stating in a December 1947 telegram that “no segregation of any individuals or groups of any kind, on the basis of race or religion, will be allowed at any exhibition of the Freedom Train.” City officials from Memphis and Birmingham refused to desegregate their Freedom Train exhibition plans, so the American Heritage Foundation canceled their tour stops, reiterating that the Freedom Train was an instrument “for strengthening the freedoms and liberties of all Americans regardless of race, creed or color.” The declaration earned front-page headlines. Louis Novins, executive vice president of the American Heritage Foundation, later quipped that the cancelation “had a better education impact than the appearance of the train itself.”

Eight months into its 15-month tour, the Freedom Train rolled across the Great Northern Railway from Grand Forks, North Dakota, to Duluth, Minnesota, arriving May 1, 1948, at 7:30 a.m. on the track just below Michigan Street, between 6th and 7th Avenue West. Grace Johnson, wife of Duluth Mayor George W. Johnson, cut a ceremonial red, white and blue ribbon to open the festivities, and the Duluth Central High



The Freedom Train rolled into Duluth, Minnesota, on May 1, 1948, carrying a collection of American founding documents. It stopped in Superior, Wisconsin, on May 2, before chugging south to Minneapolis for tours on May 4. In all, the Freedom Train visited 300 cities in 48 states from late 1947 through January 1949.



School band played the national anthem. In a span of eight hours, more than 3,000 people arrived to visit what the *Duluth News Tribune* described as “the nation’s most famous train.” One day later, it traveled across the bay to Superior, Wisconsin, where it shared headlines with an inauspicious episode for the Cleveland-Cliffs steamship *Joliet*. The 1916-built vessel, one of the older still plying the lakes, broke her stem and stove when a rogue wave slammed her into Superior’s rail-fed Great Northern ore dock. It was apropos given the surge of undercurrents threatening railways nationwide.

### **Strife at home and abroad**

With the ashes of World War II almost cool to the touch, America now faced the intensifying specter of Cold War with the Soviet Union, and on the home front, icy labor relations. Unrest was widespread, with demands coming from meatpackers, brewers, steelworkers, even railroad engineers, who entered May 1948 in a protracted and especially fierce battle for management concessions. On May 3, as the Freedom Train carried its message of unity toward Minnesota’s state capital, most of the nation’s other locomotives leaned with engineers, firemen and switchmen toward a work stoppage. It couldn’t have come at a worse time for those in the Great Lakes iron ore trade, just a month into the navigation season and facing a daunting 90-million-ton goal.

Fueled in part by worries about an ore-gobbling military conflict with the Soviets, the 313-ship U.S. Great Lakes fleet, with fewer than 30 vessels built since 1938, was being pushed to the brink of its capabilities. As a result, 12 Great Lakes shipping companies asked for help from the federal Maritime Commission, seeking a trade-in allowance on obsolete vessels that could be used as a credit on new ones. This potential savings would ease the shipping companies’ near-term financial burden for modernizing its fleet, and also soften the long-term blow if Minnesota’s Iron Range ran out of ore. What then? The fleets eyed a shift to the east, moving ore from Labrador, but for that, they still needed construction of a St. Lawrence Seaway, debated for more than 20 years, but not yet a reality. The shipping companies faced an uncomfortable gamble: shipbuilding payments today for a new fleet that might be unusable in a decade if Minnesota’s ore ran out and the Seaway remained an unbuilt pathway to fresh mines in eastern Canada.

U.S. President Harry Truman penned a letter on the topic, voicing support for the Seaway to Wisconsin Senator Alexander Wiley.

“Of course we want to keep the St. Lawrence Seaway

project alive, and I think, eventually, we will succeed in getting it through,” wrote Truman. “It is so necessary now and will be more necessary in the future.”

### **At loggerheads**

The Seaway legislation delay was tedious to Truman, but the rail strike threat was acute. With the Freedom Train visiting Minneapolis on May 6, several of the nation’s railroads served notice that thousands of shop workers would be laid off if engineers, firemen and switchmen opted to follow through with their plan to strike on May 11.

One day later, as the Freedom Train shifted to the Northern Pacific for a swing through central Minnesota, the *Duluth News Tribune* reported that iron ore traffic, and those industries dependent on it, would be “hardest hit at the Head of the Lakes in the event of the strike.” Railroad officials declared that a strike would “completely paralyze the vast industry.” Paul Van Hoven, president of the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railway, said that most of its departments would be shut down if a strike was called, and his constituents at the Great Northern and Northern Pacific said it would affect “nearly all employees.”

Grocers began to worry, too. On May 8, with the Freedom Train in St. Cloud and federal mediators struggling to find an acceptable compromise, Duluthian E.J. Gajewski, president of the Retail Grocers and Meat Dealers Association, warned the *Duluth Herald* of “a critical shortage in fruits and vegetables if the nationwide railroad strike materialized.” He said that a large percentage of those commodities arrived in Duluth via rail, and that several railroads were already placing preemptive embargoes on perishables and live freight, including the five railroads that served Duluth. Meanwhile, unnamed officials from the federal transportation office struck an even more ominous tone: “Many people do not realize that they are, on average, about 1,500 miles from breakfast.”

Van Hoven, by then a railroad man for more than 40 years, issued a stern letter to the 5,000 Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range employees, reprinted in the *Duluth Herald*:

“It is my hope that each of our engineers, firemen and hostlers will carefully and honestly consider his obligations to his country, family and his fellow employees at the railroad in deciding where his responsibility lies in this

grave matter.

This action of the engineers and firemen flouts the orderly processes established by law to resolve peacefully issues in dispute between men and management and strikes at the very heart of orderly society. It raises serious questions as to how we in America view our responsibilities toward that society and where we are headed.

The impartial president’s emergency board has reported its findings and recommendation and it is now up to both men and management to abide by the result, even though neither side may be entirely satisfied.”

At their hotel headquarters, leaders from three railroad unions rejected a 15 1/2-cent raise offer, leaving federal mediators discouraged. Chances of averting the strike faded as negotiations dragged into Sunday, May 9. It seemed that the only progress was further toward the precipice. President Truman, however, was making plenty of progress on a different kind of solution. On Monday, May 10, he delivered a preemptive strike of his own, issuing Executive Order 9957 and obtaining a federal court order forbidding the union brotherhoods’ threatened walkout a mere nine hours before the strike was set to begin.

“I have today by Executive order taken over the country’s railroads and directed the Secretary of the Army to operate them in the name of the United States Government.

A strike has been called for 6 a.m. tomorrow by 3 of the 22 railroad labor organizations—the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, and the Switchmen’s Union of North America. These three have declined to accept the findings and recommendations of an Emergency Board created by the President under the Railway Labor Act. In the strike situation thus confronting us, governmental seizure is imperative for the protection of our citizens.

It is essential to the public health and to the public welfare generally that every possible step be taken by the Government to assure to the fullest possible extent continuous and uninterrupted transportation service. A strike on our railroads would be a nationwide tragedy, with worldwide repercussions.



University of Wisconsin-Superior's Jim Dan Hill Library Archives

I call upon every railroad worker to cooperate with the Government by remaining on duty. I call upon the officers of the railroad labor organizations to take appropriate action to keep their members at work.”

According to the United Press, by 10:23 p.m., a spokesman for the three unions issued an official announcement stating that the brotherhoods would obey the court order and cancel the threatened strike. On May 11, the *New York Times* ran a front-page photo of Army Secretary Kenneth Royall and Major General Edmund Leavey, chief of Army transportation, studying the nation’s railway map in preparation for a takeover, as directed by the Commander in Chief.

In Duluth, the presidential order had an immediate “easing reaction upon the Head of the Lakes transportation and supplies picture,” according to the *Duluth Herald*, and Van Hoven, his railroad now under Army oversight, said that the “government seizure of lines no doubt will avoid any discontinuance of service.”

Duluth’s Piggly Wiggly grocery stores celebrated that confidence. Despite the supply chain scare, they still had California oranges in stock, two dozen for only 49 cents—but they were 6 cents more than the week before.

Meanwhile, at the ore docks, ships kept calling and ore kept falling—almost 55 million short tons by season’s end. It finished as one of the port’s best years ever for total tonnage: 69,242,404. ⚓

Launched in 1916 as the *Herbert F. Black*, and renamed *Joliet* after purchase by Cleveland-Cliffs in 1930, the 504-foot Great Lakes steamer made frequent calls at the Port of Duluth-Superior. She also made occasional headlines, suffering an allision in 1948 with the Great Northern Railway ore dock in Superior, Wisconsin.

## Cement *Continued from Page 5*

“If you compare fall to spring, there might be some improvement, but it is still very early in the construction season. The cement industry is no different than any of the other industries plagued by supply chain issues.”

According to Sullivan, many complex factors contribute to market conditions. They include labor shortages in mining, manufacturing and transportation; favorable weather extending construction seasons and drawing down cement inventories; and pent-up demand following pandemic-related construction delays. Global issues like the recent earthquake in Turkey could impact this year’s supplies, since Turkey is one of the world’s top exporters of cement (and a frequent origin of cement that sails to Duluth-Superior). There also are questions about what impacts hundreds of billions of dollars in federal infrastructure investment will have on cement supplies in the next few years.

“Is there going to be enough cement to support the infrastructure

program? Look, there are a lot of roads and dams and water projects and a whole bunch of stuff that will require concrete and cement,” Sullivan said. “We believe that, as time progresses, some of these supply constraints will continue, but we don’t see the infrastructure growth putting excessive demands on the market until next year during that (fall) time period ... and all of those roads and bridges aren’t coming at once.”

Optimism seems high as construction season rolls into high gear at the head of the Great Lakes. Strong communication and cooperation between cement suppliers, concrete and ready-mix companies, contractors and clients kept major projects such as the Twin Ports Interchange and the Duluth Seaway Port Authority’s warehouse expansion project on schedule last fall—and work delayed by the shortage is being done this spring.

“The issues seem to be resolved for now,” said Lembke. “We have some massive concrete pours coming

up this spring, and everything looks like we are going to be just fine. We’re on track to commission the East Annex Expansion in August, which is exciting because that additional warehouse space is greatly needed here at the port.”

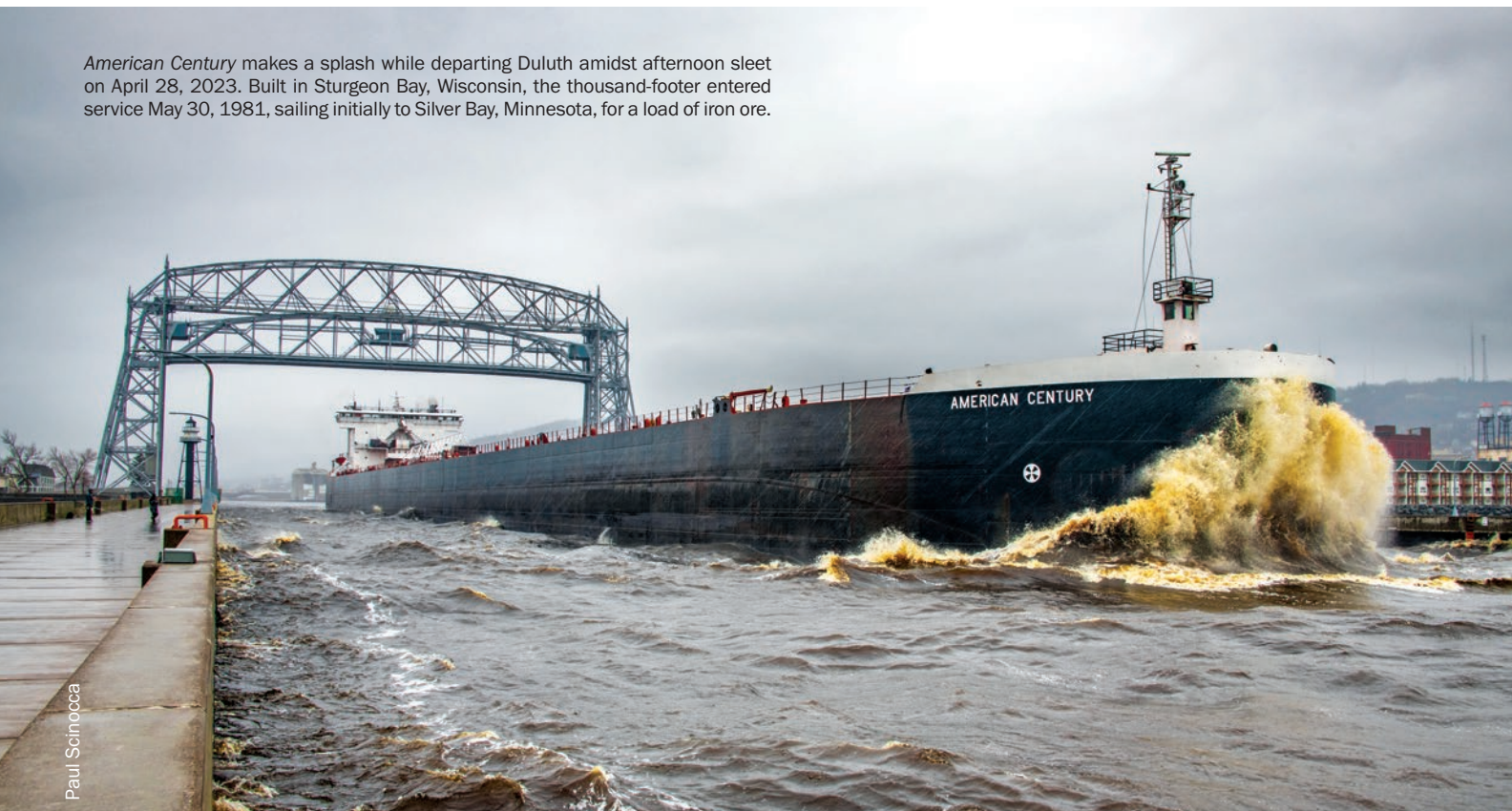
All known indications point to another robust season for cement tonnage as the port continues to supply this essential raw material for projects locally and across North America.

The watchword is “planning.” Contractors may want to place orders in advance, stay in communication with suppliers and communicate anticipated delays and setbacks to clients to ensure there are no surprises as the season progresses.

“This is a relationship-based business,” Carlson said. “If our suppliers keep us in the loop and we keep owners of our projects informed, it will mitigate problems that could come up from any kind of product shortages.”



*American Century* makes a splash while departing Duluth amidst afternoon sleet on April 28, 2023. Built in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, the thousand-footer entered service May 30, 1981, sailing initially to Silver Bay, Minnesota, for a load of iron ore.



Paul Scinocca



**Samuel L. Browman**, 86, North Mankato, former marketing director and manager of trade development for the Seaway Port Authority of Duluth (now Duluth Seaway Port Authority), died April 4, 2023, after a battle with pancreatic cancer.

A native of Albert Lea, Minn., Browman enjoyed a long career in the transportation industry. He graduated from high school in 1955 and took a job in the operating department of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway. Four years later, he joined the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, holding a succession of operating and marketing management positions until 1978, when he became manager of trade development for the Seaway Port Authority of Duluth. He later was named marketing director, his position until his retirement.

Browman traveled extensively during his time at the Duluth port, visiting clients on five continents as he worked to develop trade relationships, attract new cargos and elevate awareness of the port and its capabilities.

One career highlight occurred

in the winter of 1986-87 and put Duluth-Superior on the map in the heavy lift industry. It involved moving five enormous oil refinery reactors from Muroran, Japan, to Saskatchewan, Canada, via Duluth—the largest and heaviest cargo lift ever attempted on the Great Lakes at the time. To accommodate the offloading in Duluth, a towering, bright blue, 1,200-ton capacity Lampson Transi-Lift® crane was erected at the Clure Public Marine Terminal.

“It was a monster,” said Browman, reflecting on the project for an article in the Winter 2020 issue of *North Star Port* magazine. “It took truckload, upon truckload, upon truckload for all of its pieces and parts, plus truckloads of big timbers that were placed on the ground to accommodate both the weight of the crane and the pressure vessels to be discharged... you knew something big was cooking, that’s for sure.”

Browman was a member of various transportation, trade and professional organizations during his tenure in Duluth, including the



Duluth Seaway Port Authority

Sam Browman’s tenure with the Duluth Seaway Port Authority started as manager of trade development on Sept. 1, 1978. On April 3, 1987, he was promoted to marketing director, a role in which he served until his retirement on Dec. 31, 1997.

National Association of Wheat Growers, the National Sunflower Association and North Central Bean Dealers Association.

In retirement, Browman continued to enjoy travel and other interests, such as long distance target shooting. He was preceded in death by his wife, Pat, and is survived by two daughters and a son, 10 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

**Jerome “Jerry” Bielicki**, 77, of Marquette, Mich., died April 28. Bielicki was an award-winning photographer and videographer whose images were featured in numerous publications, including *North Star Port Magazine*, *Lake Superior Magazine*, *Seaway Review*, *Work Boat*, *Mariners Weather Log*, *Farm Journal* and *Earth*. The Detroit native earned a degree in marketing/TV & film



from Wayne State University and began his professional career in Marquette. He moved to Duluth in 1982. Bielicki spent three years working for Bresnan Communications before becoming a self-employed photographer, specializing in maritime ships and freighters. His photographs of maritime subjects were

used by many companies and organizations—Duluth Seaway Port Authority, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, City of Duluth, NOAA, Lake Superior Paper Industries, Interlake Steamship Company, Bethlehem Steel Co., Algoma Marine, American Steamship Company, St Lawrence Seaway Development Corp. and more. In 1989, Bielicki won Best Documentary Video for “Laker Odyssey” for Minnesota Public Television. He also won two awards in 1989 and one in 1992 from the Eastman Kodak/U.S. Naval Institute. Bielicki returned to Marquette in 1992 and continued to use his photography and videography skills in a number of jobs in television and print media. In 1997, he won an Associated Press award for his news photography with *The Mining Journal*. He is survived by a sister, two nephews and a niece.

# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

## LOLLIPOP

Weighing up to 30 pounds, the lollipops used by Duluth Cargo Connect stevedores would contain enough sugar to cause a serious toothache. But these lollipops aren't for eating. Instead, they're used to guide and protect cargo being offloaded from vessels. When wind blades or containers are lifted off oceangoing vessels, one can expect to see crews holding the tools at each corner to keep the cargo pieces from swinging or crashing. Made using CC Series buoys manufactured by Polyform US, these sweet-sounding contraptions also support the safety of the men and women who use them. C.J. Whereatt provided us with an in-depth explanation of these human-sized, but inedible, lollipops.

**North Star Port:** Is there an official name for the lollipop?

**C.J. Whereatt:** The lollipop is basically just a buoy on a PVC pipe. There's no certain name for it, it's just something that we put together to protect our lifts.

**Port:** How is this tool used in cargo-handling operations?

**Whereatt:** We use them for unloading cargo from ships. It's basically an extension of our arms, to keep out of the way of the piece (of cargo) and prevent it from either hitting the ship or hitting another piece. It softens the blow and keeps us from having any damage.

**Port:** Does it take special training to use one? Who might be seen using a lollipop at the port?

**Whereatt:** Normally any (stevedore) on the ship is qualified to use it, but there's always someone overseeing to make sure there's no one in a pinch point. This person is guiding you, saying 'Alright, it's coming this way, make sure your lollipop is in there,' so it doesn't hit the next piece or hit the ship. All eyes are on the piece and you want to make sure your hands are safe. These lollipops make sure that happens.

**Port:** While the candy version might cost you a quarter, how much does one of these lollipops cost?

**Whereatt:** They come in various sizes. These particular ones (pictured) are about \$80 each, so you could figure that \$160 can save a million dollars' worth of material on a ship. It's a good investment and they do the job very well for us.

**Port:** Is the lollipop unique to Duluth, or is the tool



C.J. Whereatt with the ever-important lollipop.

Korey Garceau

used in ports around the world?

**Whereatt:** Our first version of the lollipop came from a ship that arrived from overseas, so I'm guessing they're used elsewhere, too. We noticed that they were using them on their ship to load, and we did some research and found out how to use them for our own purposes. We developed as we went, evolving from smaller ones to bigger ones.

**Port:** So you could say that there's a distinct Duluth flavor to these lollipops?

**Whereatt:** I wouldn't, but you can. I'm leaving all the bad puns to you. LOL!

### Duluth Cargo Connect warehouse expansion continues

The construction continues on the East Annex Warehouse Expansion at the Clure Public Marine Terminal, with walls and roof work underway this spring. When complete, the project will expand Duluth Cargo Connect warehousing space by 56,000 square feet, lifting its total warehousing capacity over 500,000 square feet. Adolfson & Peterson Construction is aiming to finish work on the rail-served expansion by early fall 2023.



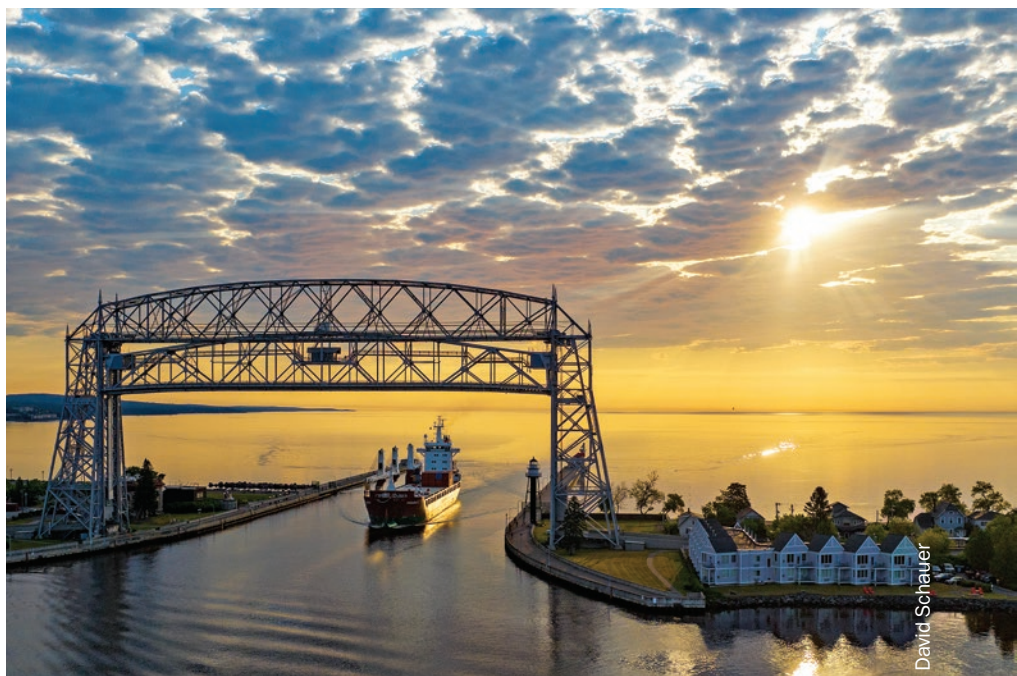
## Duluth-Antwerp liner service launches in May

For the first time in decades, the Port of Duluth will offer a regular trans-Atlantic liner service connecting North America's furthest-inland seaport with Antwerp, Belgium.

Dutch shipping company Spliethoff will lead the new initiative, providing ships for the dedicated monthly liner service to carry breakbulk, project and containerized cargoes, plus special bulk cargo arrangements, between Europe and the Great Lakes' top tonnage port. The service will offer short transit times of 20-25 days and reduced costs to importers and exporters, plus the opportunity to parcel the ship, meaning the ability to book space on the vessel for partial pieces and loads. Spliethoff is also offering its own pool of containers to help ensure a ready supply of boxes.

"The launch of this liner service creates new opportunities and new pathways for our customers and anyone with cargo to move between Europe and the North American heartland," said Jonathan Lamb, president of Duluth Cargo Connect.

Spliethoff's first vessel is slated to call at the Duluth Cargo Connect



A new era is dawning in Duluth as Spliethoff will inaugurate its Duluth-Antwerp liner service in 2023.

facilities in mid-May, arriving with a diverse manifest that will include agricultural machinery, containers and other goods.

"This liner service can be a significant supply chain advantage for our regional customers, reducing cost and supply chain delays, and it's

also a win for the environment," said Deb DeLuca, executive director, Duluth Seaway Port Authority. "Sailing those cargoes to and from Duluth maximizes the waterborne leg of the journey, which significantly reduces carbon emissions and land-based congestion."

## National Maritime Day event held May 22 in Duluth

The Duluth-Superior Maritime Club hosted its annual National Maritime Day luncheon May 22 at The Garden in Canal Park. Headliners for this year's celebration included Adam Tindall-Schlicht, administrator for the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, and Dr. Richard Stewart, who was presented with the U.S. Maritime Administration's Merchant Marine Medal for Outstanding Achievement (see more in our Making Waves installment on Page 21). Reverend Doug Paulson from the Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers opened the event with a service of remembrance. This event marks the annual season finale for Maritime Club luncheons, which will recommence in September.



# River Quest nears 1,500 participants again

St. Louis River Quest, the annual waterfront education field trip for area sixth-graders, received commitments to participate from 12 schools in 2023 with a total of nearly 1,500 students. The event was held May 15-18 at the DECC and on board the *Vista Star*, which sails the harbor so students can explore the working port. The Duluth Seaway Port Authority operated a learning station at the event, which began in 1993. Other station hosts included Minnesota Power, Minnesota Sea Grant, the City of Duluth, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Forest Service, Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. EPA, Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve, Minnesota DNR, Duluth Sail; Power Squadron, and Sappi. For more information, visit: [stlouisriverquest.org](http://stlouisriverquest.org).



Students move to and from the *Vista Star* during River Quest 2022. This year's event was held May 15-18, 2023.

Jayson Hiron

**AWARDED:** The U.S. Maritime Administration's Merchant Marine Medal for Outstanding Achievement to DR. RICHARD STEWART, licensed shipmaster, member of the Duluth-Superior Maritime Club board and professor emeritus of the UWS Transportation and Logistics program. The award was established in 2002 to salute members of the maritime industry for an act of humanitarian nature directly to an individual or groups of individuals, long and dedicated years of service or achievement, or for an extraordinary valuable contribution to the maritime industry.

**ANNOUNCED:** Plans to retire in November 2023, CHRIS CONNOR, president and CEO of the American Association of Port Authorities since September 2019. During his AAPA tenure, Connor improved the coalition's financial standing and enhanced its presence on Capitol Hill. Connor is the former global president and CEO of Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics, one of the world's largest ocean car carriers.

**HIRED:** As St. Louis River Quest program coordinator, BETH RUARK, an instructor with the University of Minnesota Duluth's College of Education and Human Services Professions. Ruark will help lead the annual waterfront educational event, which

brings approximately 1,500 sixth-graders to the DECC and out on the water courtesy of the Vista Fleet each May.

**RELIEVED:** U.S. Coast Guard Ninth District commander MICHAEL JOHNSTON by JONATHAN HICKEY during a change-of-command ceremony on April 28 in Cleveland, Ohio. Hickey served previously as a director of operational logistics. The Ninth Coast Guard District is responsible for all operations throughout the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence Seaway and parts of the surrounding states.

**DISCOVERED:** An obscure relationship while researching historical connections between Duluth and Antwerp, Belgium, route of the new Spliethoff liner service. MAGNUS "MIKE" GOODMAN dazzled both cities in the 1920s. Hailed as the fastest skater among hockey players participating at the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp, Goodman won a gold medal with Canada—the first awarded for ice hockey in Olympic competition—and then moved to Duluth where he played and coached for more than a decade. Goodman also owned an oil station in Duluth. On Jan. 25, 1922, Goodman registered a goal and an assist in a 4-0 Duluth victory over Pittsburgh; the *Duluth Herald* reported Goodman's work on offense and defense "was the best ever seen in this city."

## MAKING WAVES

A port news roundup

# Support the Seafarers Center

The Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers is an ecumenical ministry of hospitality for seafarers visiting Duluth, Minn., and Superior, Wis. The Seafarers Center in Duluth has served seafarers for more than 50 years.

It exists because of the support of church bodies and congregations, along with individuals and port businesses who are concerned about the wellbeing of those who have chosen to sail the seas for their livelihood.

The Seafarers Center began with Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers during the grain millers strike in 1964. At that time, Norbert Mokros was serving as one of the pastors at Concordia Lutheran in Duluth, with 10 foreign grain ships at anchor in the Twin Ports awaiting settlement of the dispute. Foreign sailors were stranded for several weeks, Mokros saw the plight of these strangers.

With the support of volunteers, ship visits began with a shuttle service from the anchored ships to town. Books and magazines were made available to seafarers, translators were secured, and



Rev. Mokros visited those who had been hospitalized.

When the strike ended there were many people who supported the idea of creating a regular ministry to seafarers. In 1969 Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers was incorporated as a Christian ecumenical ministry founded on the biblical concept of hospitality.

The Seafarers Center offers assistance and friendship to seafarers from multiple religious, ethnic and national backgrounds respecting the faith traditions of the crew members.

After 54 years it still ministers to seafarers that call at the Twin Ports. To learn more or donate, please visit:

[www.seafarerstwinports.org/donate](http://www.seafarerstwinports.org/donate)



# IN FOCUS: Matthew Pastick

*Our In Focus series profiles the photographers whose images bring the port's working waterfront to life.*

## How did you get into photographing the shipping scene?

I have been taking photos since high school and really well over 40 years. I just love to capture the moment in time. I'm a retired baker. I moved up to the North Shore seven years ago and got into taking photos of ships and landscapes and Lake Superior in general.

## What draws you to Great Lakes shipping for images?

What draws me to the shipping season is the lake and the beauty of it, mostly the light, the storms, the sea smoke and weather.

## Do you have a personal connection to Lake Superior?

My connection with the lake flows from years of coming up north. I would be at work, and the lake would call me, so I would head north and take in the photography any time of year.

## Do you have other specialty focus areas, as well?

My other areas of focus are sunrises, sunsets and pretty much anything Mother Nature has to offer. I love capturing animals going about their lives. Not only is it satisfying to witness such beauty and wonder, it also is satisfying to share it all.

## How would you describe your approach to photography?

My approach to photography really comes with the weather, the time of day and the light. I follow the clouds

and storms. I plan some of my photos for ships, but I also like to fly by the seat of my pants and go on a whim. I have added a drone to my photography. Sometimes it is very helpful in getting additional views.

## How do you know when you get a great one?

When I get a great photo, it is usually the timing and light of the subject and being in the right spot at the right time. My gift is reading the clouds and sky and the weather at hand. The best part of my photography is that it gets me outdoors and enjoying nature.



Matthew Pastick



Photos by Matthew Pastick



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