



# Duluth Seaway Port Authority

Spring 2011

NORTH STAR PORT

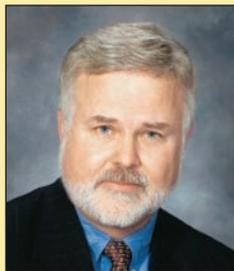


# Ah, the good old days

With the arrival of spring, we're celebrating the start of another shipping season on the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway system. Yet this spring also brings with it strong winds, high waves and severe storms and a snarl of ballast water regulations, low lake levels and woefully underfunded dredging budgets. Is it any wonder



The Harbor Line  
**Adolph Ojard**  
Port Director



that I'd rather be on Lake Superior — fishing — than sitting here worrying about all of the issues facing Duluth-Superior and other port communities like ours?

Ah, for the good old days and the life of a fisherman. I look back on growing up in Knife River,

a small fishing village 20 miles up the shore from Duluth on Lake Superior, with a warm glow of nostalgia. My vacations were spent in the river and on the beach doing all kinds of water activities — most centered on commercial fishing.

As a very young lad I would fish with my Grandfather Ojard, helping him lift nets, pick fish from the nets and gut and clean our daily catch. We would venture out at 6 o'clock as the morning fog was burning off the lake and run several miles out to lift bottom nets that were set in 300-plus feet of water.

A beautiful day working on the lake in the calm quiet of the morn-

ing with a distant call from a gull was a mystical, almost spiritual experience. We sold our catch to a local market where the fish were smoked and peddled throughout the area.

Summer was a time for boat, dock and net repair and maintenance. Fishermen were still lifting their nets at dawn, but the fishing was light and the weather warm. Some commercial fishermen also operated small resorts with cabins on the shore that they rented out to vacationers and to whom they offered charter fishing trips. Others had smokehouses and sold fresh and smoked fish from roadside stands along Highway 61.

Just as in farming, there was seasonality of activity to commercial fishing. And, as with farming, weather played a critical role in the daily activities of a commercial fisherman. Nets had to be lifted and fish picked, but some days the weather was too severe; such a day would be declared a fisherman's holiday. Like all good Scandinavian holidays, it called for a beverage or two. This was particularly true during the late fall and early winter herring run when exhausted fishermen needed rest.

I remember in second grade a classmate standing in front of the room for "show and tell" declaring to the students: "My dad works so hard that when he comes home he falls asleep in the hall with his hat on." This was acknowledged by all present with a solemn, affirmative nod.

Seen through a child's eyes, my stories today may have the feel of Mayberry, RFD. In reality, fishing was a hard way to scratch out a living. The fishermen dealt with ice-

covered boats in severe storms with high winds, waves and blinding snow. Nets had to be lifted sometimes in the worst of conditions. Nets with fish already in them captured fewer fish and, if left underwater too long, could spoil a whole catch. Always under pressure to provide for the family, these North Shore fishermen took risks, and incidents occurred.

On the morning of Nov. 23, 1928, my maternal grandfather, Gust Torgersen, headed out through the Duluth ship canal in heavy weather in a new 35-foot, gas-powered boat to lift his herring nets. That morning, my grandmother Hannah sat in the sun porch of their Knife River home watching the high waves and blowing snow batter the shoreline. She was somewhat relieved to know that, with this inclement weather, Pa would be coming home and taking a break. However, three days later, his body was found (along with those of three helpers) washed up on the south shore of Lake Superior near Cornucopia, Wis.

Widowed at age 36 with four young children, my grandmother sharecropped her fishing nets and equipment to others and took in boarders at their fish camp on Isle Royale. Later she developed a four-cabin resort and served trout dinners out of her home for tourists. After the children were raised, she worked as a domestic cook for several wealthy Duluth families.

Thanks for indulging me in this bit of nostalgia. Perhaps the "good old days" weren't all good — and maybe the risks that lie ahead of us aren't as bad as they seem.

But still, I'd rather be fishing.

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**About North Star Port**

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NORTH STAR PORT**

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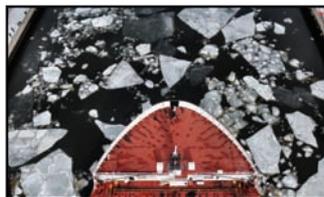
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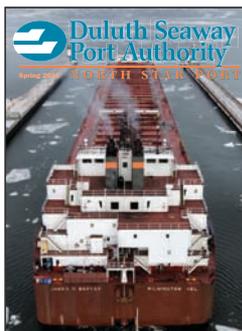


**8 Take a bow**  
Let the 2011 shipping season begin!



**14 American Victory**  
A vessel now in long-term layup in Superior was a ship of distinction for the U.S. in WWII

**On the covers**



Mary T. George

**On the front:**

The *James R. Barker* got the Twin Ports' navigation season off to a brisk start with its departure on March 17.

**On the back:**

The *BBC Oregon* arrived on April 24 with the first wind cargo of this season — deck-loaded containers of wind turbine equipment plus hubs and nacelles in the cargo holds.



Joseph K. Kubala

# Christening set for M/V *Hon. James L. Oberstar*

The Interlake Steamship Company has announced the renaming of the M/V *Charles M. Beeghly* to the *Hon. James L. Oberstar* in recognition of Oberstar, the retired U.S. Congressman from Minnesota. The vessel has been sailing the Great Lakes as the *Oberstar* since the start of this 2011 navigation season. An official christening ceremony is set for May 24 in Duluth.

Congressman Oberstar dedicated nearly a half-century of public service to the people of Minnesota and this nation through his work in the U.S. House of Representatives. His tenure on Capitol Hill stretched over 36 years as a member of Congress and 11 years as a senior Congressional aide. Most recently, he had served as chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he earned a reputation as the leading Congressional expert on transportation issues.

Growing up in a household headed by an iron miner, the Congressman's exposure to the iron ore industry and Great Lakes shipping started early. As a legislator, Congressman Oberstar was known as a tireless champion of maritime issues, particularly those related to the Great Lakes. He represented Minnesota's 8th District, which includes the Iron Range, a region dependent upon Great Lakes shipping to move iron ore pellets to market.

Congressman Oberstar fought for adequate icebreaking resources on this waterway system to keep

ore moving to the nation's steel mills as long as possible during the winter months. He also worked to legislate funding for a critically needed second lock at Sault Ste. Marie to ensure redundancy in handling the largest lake carriers. Among his many other accomplishments, the Congressman was a vocal advo-

75 feet and a carrying capacity of 27,500 short tons. The vessel was built in 1958 at the American Shipbuilding Company in Toledo, Ohio, and christened the Str. *Shenago II* in 1959. She has undergone numerous efficiency improvements since then, including: a mid-body insert that increased its length by 96 feet in 1972,



Already bearing her new name, the *Hon. James L. Oberstar* takes on iron ore pellets at Northshore Mining in Silver Bay this spring.

Photos by Patrick Lapinski

cate for adequate and fairly funded dredging across the Great Lakes — a critical component for the efficiency of maritime commerce on this inland waterway.

“Interlake is honored to recognize Congressman Oberstar's service and dedication to our country by naming a vessel after him,” said Mark Barker, Interlake president. “Few legislators have made more contributions to Great Lakes shipping and the United States maritime industry.”

The M/V *Hon. James L. Oberstar* is 806 feet long with a beam of

conversion to a self-unloader in 1981 and repowering from steam to diesel in 2009.



The vessel's new name is getting around.

# E-mail question prompts a story on limestone

A recent e-mail inquiry about a commodity that moves through the Port of Duluth-Superior led us to believe that a magazine article might be in order. For, after all, if a curious trainspotter in Bemidji, Minn., has a question that ties in with our work in the Port, surely many of our magazine readers would have similar interest in the topic. Thus, the following article.

First, the e-mail:

*I'm presenting a speech at our Toastmasters club in Bemidji about what we see on the trains that come through our town, and [I] have been told that kaolin comes through the Duluth Port. It is used in the sugar beet industry in western Minnesota. Where do the ships come from that deliver that cargo? Kim.*

Our Ron Johnson, trade development officer at Duluth-Superior, fielded the e-mail. He replied,

*Kim, the product you're referring to is probably limestone if it is coming from Duluth-Superior and going*



*to sugar beet processors in North Dakota as well as western Minnesota. The limestone comes from Michigan and is used for:*

- *Sugar beet processing.*
- *Processing into granules for roofing material.*
- *Aggregate (gravel).*
- *A fluxing agent, which is added during the pelletizing process at some of our mines on the Iron Range. (Fluxed pellets are preferred at some steel-mill blast furnaces.)*

■ *A wide array of applications, including paper production, power plant pollution control, municipal and industrial water and sewage treatment and water softening.*

Johnson's reply added, "Interest-

ingly enough, some of the trucks and rail cars you see coming through your area are bringing beet pulp pellets to Duluth-Superior for loading out on ships bound to Europe and North Africa. The pellets are a by-product of sugar processing and are used as dairy feed."

As for the kaolin in Kim's inquiry, it has no connection to the Twin Ports. Johnson wrote, "Kaolin clay does not currently move through the Port of Duluth-Superior. It is used by paper mills, and they receive it by rail from Georgia. It comes in slurry form, so it is transported in insulated tank cars."

About 2.8 million short tons of limestone arrive in the Twin Ports every year. Much of it comes from Rogers City, Mich., home of the Michigan Limestone Operations LP, which operates the world's largest limestone quarry.

Michigan Limestone, now a subsidiary of Carmeuse Lime & Stone, Inc., says that its stone "is used in everything from glass manufacturing, paint fabrication, baking powder assembly and ammonia production."

Rogers City (Port Calcite) is not the only Great Lakes port that handles limestone. Others are Cedarville (Port Dolomite), Drummond Island, Port Inland and Presque Isle in Michigan; Marblehead, Ohio; and Bruce Mines, Manitoulin Island, Port Colborne and Smelter Bay in Ontario.

Docks in Duluth-Superior that accept limestone are Hallett Dock Co., Graymont Superior Lime, CN/DMIR, C. Reiss Terminal and Northland Pier.



Ken Newhams

Limestone is an important commodity in the Twin Ports. Here, the Algosoo discharges stone at a Duluth dock.

# A success story decades in the making:

## *Cooperative remediation restores a healthy ecosystem at Stryker Bay*

Sometimes “cleaning up” isn’t as easy as it sounds. For nearly 70 years, Stryker Bay and the adjoining slips 6 and 7 — collectively known as the St. Louis River/Interlake/Duluth Tar (SLRIDT) Site —

materials testing and water quality sampling was conducted through the years. The area was declared a federal Superfund site in 1983. The first two cleanup efforts, in the 1990s, focused on tar seeps and soils. From

A number of organizations, led by the Minnesota Pollution Agency, the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources and many other stakeholders, were involved in the cooperative process to determine how best to contain and remediate the contaminated waste. All involved were concerned about the environmental and health concerns posed by moving toxic materials — not only at the SLRIDT Site but also within the St. Louis River basin.

### **Contaminated sediment removal**

Mitigation of sediments at the site began in 2004, and sand capping was initially tested at slip 7. During the next two years, Marine Tech of Duluth turned slip 6 into a Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) area. Another contractor (MCM Marine) worked with Shaw Environmental in 2007-08 to remove contaminants mechanically and transport them hydraulically into the slip 6 CAD.

Marine Tech was then hired to engineer a system to deliver capping material while holding contaminants in place. The company came up with the solution: *hydraulic* capping — setting up a feed conveyor system on shore to hydraulically pump capping material to a placement barge.

Using specialized software to control placement rates, Marine Tech laid down a six-inch layer of sand to give structure to the contaminated sediments. A layer of activated carbon was then added to filter any sediment that might work its way through the cap. Slowly and



Hydraulic capping was key to the Stryker Bay mitigation process. Shown here is the sand feed conveyor connected to a hydraulic pump for sand capping delivery.



Slip 6 was turned into a Confined Aquatic Disposal area. Taken during capping operations, this photo shows Marine Tech’s environmental media barge in the foreground and its sand cap barge near the end of the slip.

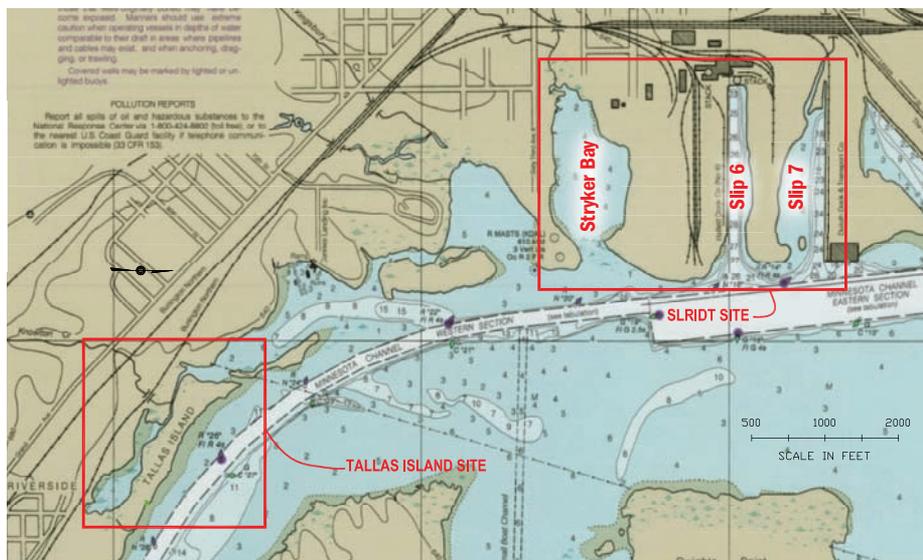
had been heavily polluted with industrial waste: coal tar byproducts.

A tremendous amount of mate-

start to finish, remediation and mitigation have taken three decades to complete.

methodically, more layers of sand were applied — six inches at a time — until it totaled four and a half feet. The weight of the sand compressed the substrate, sealing and capping the hazardous sediments below.

base of vegetation and micro-organisms — the company hydraulically pumped the materials through two stations along the St. Louis River. Finally, the company used that environmental media to cover 40 acres



Map highlights Tallas Island and the SLRIDT site.

### Wetlands restoration

Late last fall, Marine Tech returned to put the finishing touches on the Stryker Bay remediation site. The final step of the process was to restore native habitat to the basin.

Meanwhile, a few miles up river, years of erosion had filled in what once had been a valuable fish habitat near an area called Tallas Island. The Minnesota DNR sensed an opportunity, and SLRIDT Site construction managers once again turned to Marine Tech.

The challenge was to hydraulically dredge and remove the sediments that had filled in the basin behind Tallas Island and then pump it two-and-a-half miles down the river to the Stryker Bay remediation site.

Marine Tech first had to dredge a channel to separate the island from the mainland to create fish habitat. To transport the nutrient-rich material — with its well-established

of Stryker Bay with a six-inch layer to bring the underwater ecosystem back to its natural state.

“We like to think of it as hydraulically transporting ‘instant environment,’” noted Ted Smith, Marine Tech president. “When all was said and done, we’d placed a combination of more than 150,000 yards of media (sand and mud) and managed to restore native habitat to a critical section of the St. Louis River basin. New wetlands are already providing habitat at Stryker Bay for birds, trees and plants, while Tallas Island offers prime fish spawning grounds — all of which can now be enjoyed for generations to come.”

One final note: All of the costs of the sediment studies, tests and related cleanup activities are being borne by the responsible parties (XIK Corp.). Current estimates place the final outlay at approximately \$60 million.

## New NCB surveyor in Twin Ports

April 1 marked the start of a new chapter for National Cargo Bureau (NCB) operations in the Twin Ports as Captain Carsten Brueninghaus assumed responsibilities as senior surveyor. His job is to ensure the safe handling and loading of international bulk cargoes by reviewing stowage plans, evaluating cargo positions and documenting the stability of loaded ships. He works alongside USDA grain inspectors to check cargo holds for cleanliness and to ensure compliance with federal regulations.



Brueninghaus

Born in West Germany, Brueninghaus spent the better part of his 30-year career as a mariner, serving as first mate, safety officer and captain on a variety of vessels worldwide, including cruise ships, tugboats, expedition passenger vessels, RoRo ferries, survey vessels, freighters and container ships.

He left his home in a heavily industrialized western part of West Germany at the age of 16 to attend marine training schools in the North Sea. Starting as an able bodied seaman, he eventually earned his German master’s ocean license as well as a degree in industrial engineering for maritime traffic.

Last year, while in the Port of New York, the vessel on which Brueninghaus was serving as chief mate was boarded by NCB for inspections. Impressed with the caliber of his work, NCB officials encouraged him to apply for a job with the bureau. That led to a new job. He started in July 2010 and spent several months training in the U.S., including a two-month stint in Portland with Twin Ports’ former NCB senior surveyor Capt. Sencer Under.

Capt. Brueninghaus can be reached at **(218) 727-3003** or [ncbdul@netcargo.org](mailto:ncbdul@netcargo.org).

The local NCB office is now in the Port Authority administration building.

# Celebrating the firsts of 2011

## First Laker Out March 17 16:16 *James R. Barker*

The 2011 commercial navigation season in the Port of Duluth-Superior got off to a brisk start on March 17 with the afternoon departure of its first laker, the *James R. Barker*. Having spent winter layup at the Superior Midwest Energy Terminal, the vessel was loaded with coal for a cross-lake delivery to Presque Isle, Mich.

Other lakers were on the move in mid-March on Lakes Michigan and Huron, too, before the opening of the Soo Locks on March 25. They were carrying coal and iron ore pellets across the lakes to replenish critically low inventories at power plants and steel mills.

## First Laker In March 26 05:28 *Paul R. Tregurtha*

On March 26, the Port's first inbound laker arrived. She was the *Paul R. Tregurtha*, the first vessel to have transited the Soo Locks after they opened the day before.

## First Grain Out April 7 23:35 *CSL Mapleglen*

The first grain cargo of the season left the Twin Ports (from the CHS elevator) on April 7 aboard the Canadian laker, the *CSL Mapleglen*.

## First Salties In April 11 07:10 *Federal Leda*

The first oceangoing vessel of 2011 to have transited the entire Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway system arrived on April 11. The Cyprus-flag *Federal Leda* sailed beneath the Aerial Lift Bridge at 7:10:11 a.m. and headed to CHS in Superior to load durum wheat.

The Port Authority hosted a First Ship Ceremony onboard the *Federal Leda* the next day as maritime and community leaders officially welcomed Captain Rafal Kapuscinski and his crew to the Twin Ports. At the event, the winner of this year's First Ship Contest was announced – Brenda Koch of Windom, Minn., whose guess was only 49 seconds off the ship's official arrival time.

The *Federal Leda* began her voyage in Constanza, Romania, making two stops en route to discharge steel (in Windsor and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario). She loaded nearly 21,000 short tons of durum wheat in Superior and left the Twin Ports bound for Italy, with an intermediate stop in Quebec to take on 11,000 short tons of titanium slag.



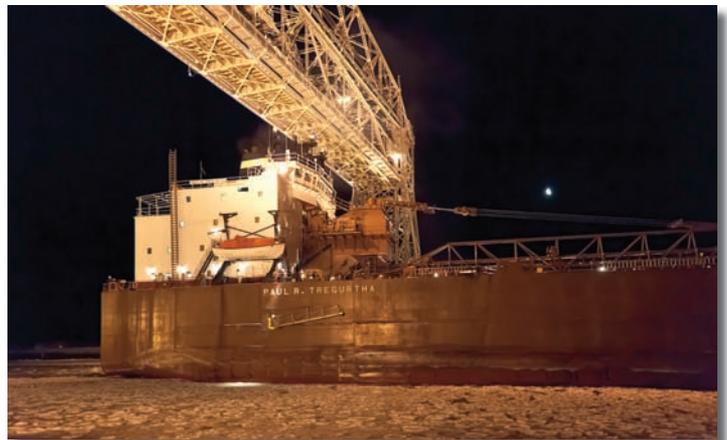
Above: Bird's-eye view of the *James R. Barker's* outbound bow.  
Right: The *Federal Leda* becomes the season's first saltie to arrive.





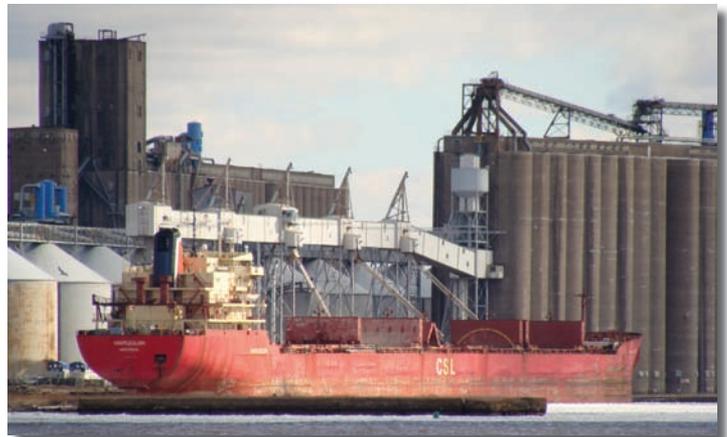
Mary T. George

The *Mackinaw* signals spring on the Lakes as she clears the Soo on March 23.



Robert Weilton

The *Paul R. Tregurtha* is the first laker both to clear the Soo Locks and to arrive in the Port of Duluth-Superior.



Lynn Wegner

The *CSL Mapleglen* loads the Port's first outbound grain cargo.



Robert Weilton

Longshoremen move a grain loading spout to the next cargo hold aboard the *Federal Leda*.

## Minnesota iron ore pellets to China

Photos by Mary T. George



The CSL Assiniboine takes on iron ore pellets at BNSF Railway Dock 5 at the end of March.



Pellets pour into the ship's hold.

Cliffs Natural Resources, which has a major presence on Minnesota's Iron Range, these days enjoys rising global demand for high-quality iron ore pellets, particularly in China, India and other countries with emerging economies. That demand is coupled with higher international iron ore prices. As a result, Cliffs can afford to get ore from its mines in Minnesota and Michigan to Quebec City via the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway system. From Quebec City, oceangoing vessels can then transport pellets to steelmakers worldwide. Cliffs has indicated that it will ship a million tons of pellets to China alone this year. The CSL

Assiniboine was in Port on March 30 to load the first shipment of Minnesota ore this season bound for China at BNSF Railway Dock 5 in Superior.

Robert Welton



Maritime photos honor the memory of Thomas A. Clure.

## A photographic tribute to Thomas A. Clure

Johnson Killen & Seiler, the oldest law firm in northern Minnesota, recently installed a maritime photography exhibit in its lobby in tribute to long-time partner Thomas A. Clure (1938-2010) in recognition of his dedication to the Port and this community. The firm wanted to honor Clure's memory with images that reflected the love he had for the waterfront, the practice of law and his family's maritime legacy. Clure was a member of the Maritime Law Association of the United States, past president and board member of the Lake Superior Marine Museum and served as commissioner on the Duluth Seaway Port Authority from 2001 until his death in May of last year. His father, Arthur M. Clure, had served as one of the Authority's first commissioners and is for whom the Clure Public Marine Terminal is named.

The five framed photographs represent the changing face of the Duluth-Superior harbor Tom loved so much and feature images captured by Duluth photographers Robert Welton, Dennis O'Hara and Mary T. George.

## Maritime Day in the Twin Ports

National Maritime Day will be celebrated in the Twin Ports this year on May 23. This annual event — a combined salute to merchant mariners, merchant marine veterans and the entire



Weakley

maritime industry — is hosted locally by the Propeller Club of Duluth-Superior.

The program at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center will feature keynote speaker Jim Weakley, president of the Lake Carriers' Association. His presentation, entitled "Sailors, Ships & Security," will focus on security from three maritime perspectives — homeland, national and economic security — and the integral role played by our domestic fleet.

The event will be followed by an optional harbor tour on the *Vista Star*.

National Maritime Day is commemorated annually on May 22, but the Propeller Club opted to host its formal observance one day later this year.

### *A moment of silence ...*

Retired and veteran mariners from the U.S. Merchant Marine Viking Chapter travel from the Twin Cities each year to commemorate National Maritime Day in Duluth.



Wilson

This year, when the ship's bell is rung during the memorial service, our hearts will be a bit heavier, having recently lost veteran Howard Wilson. With his enthusiastic spirit, he not only helped coordinate this annual event in Duluth but also ensured that the merchant mariners were included in commemorative services at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis every year.

# Vintage vessels now have a Center of Expertise in Duluth

The U.S. Coast Guard now has seven Centers of Expertise across the country, each with a different focus, to raise basic competencies and provide reliable, highly complex advice both within the agency and externally to the maritime industry.

The Vintage Vessel National Center of Expertise (VVNCOE) was created to ensure consistency of inspections at all ports and the operational safety of all equipment onboard the shipping industry's oldest, or vintage, vessels. The vision is to have this office become the repository of Coast Guard expertise and best inspection practices to maintain the fleet of vintage steamers operating on the Great Lakes. Those vessels, built before 1981, share some common traits: steam propulsion engines, riveted hulls, unique electrical systems and non-contemporary standard construction. Thanks to lobbying efforts of local officials and the support of former Congressman Jim Oberstar, the VVNCOE was located in Duluth.

The official launch date was December 2009, when two civilian marine inspectors, Gene Walroos and Steve Petersen, were hired. Walroos, a graduate of AMO School of Engineering and Navigation in Toledo, has served the maritime industry in several roles throughout the years — chief engineer, vessel manager and port engineer for Great Lakes Fleet and, more recently, as general manager

of Fraser Shipyards in Superior. Petersen, a 30-year Coast Guard veteran, served 16 years as marine inspector, including a tour at Marine Safety Office Detroit. More recently, he was employed as the ship repair superintendent for Nicholson Terminal and Dock in Detroit.

Late last summer, the VVNCOE added two to the staff: Lieutenant Kevin Broyles as supervisor and Chief Warrant Officer Andrew Adolphson. Both were previously at Marine Safety Unit Duluth Inspections/Investigations.



The VVNCOE team (from left): Andrew Adolphson, Gene Walroos, Kevin Broyles and Steve Petersen.

## Duluth Seaway Port Authority Board re-elects officers

The Duluth Seaway Port Authority Board of Commissioners re-elected officers at its annual meeting in March: **Bill Kron**, president; **Steve Raukar**, vice president; **Ray Klosowski**, secretary; **Cal Larson**, treasurer; and **Lowell Hellervik**, assistant treasurer. Together with fellow board members **Norm Voorhees** and **Rick Revoir** of Duluth, the seven commissioners oversee the Port Authority's financial and organizational affairs.



Port Authority commissioners Cal Larson (left) and Lowell Hellervik visit in St. Paul with Minnesota Lt. Gov. Yvonne Prettnier Solon to discuss port-related topics. The lieutenant governor, a Duluth native and resident, is a longtime maritime advocate. She served as a Port Authority commissioner and in the early 1990s was president of the Authority board.

## Ilenda named Ceres vice president

Charles "Chuck" Ilenda, a 40-year employee of Ceres Terminals Inc. in the Twin Ports, has been named vice president of the organization.

He joined Ceres as part of the company's expansion of its first operation in Chicago and now oversees and manages the Ceres Duluth operations at eight grain elevators throughout the Port that handle grain and bulk grain products.

Ilenda will continue as Port Manager of the Duluth operation. He also will continue to serve as president of the Duluth-Superior Marine Association.



Ilenda



Song and prayer were part of the Blessing of the Port.

## Blessing of the Port

Over 50 people – mariners, port workers, their families and members of the community – gathered on March 29 at the Lake Superior Maritime Museum in Duluth to celebrate and offer blessings for the 2011 shipping season. The third annual Blessing of the Port was led by the Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers, an agency that provides assistance, volunteer services and spiritual support to seafarers and their loved ones. Around 130 congregations plus numerous individual donors and foundations participate in this vital ministry, which has served the Port of Duluth-Superior for more than 40 years. For more information or to volunteer with The Seafarers Center, contact Tom Anderson: **(218) 727-5897** | [www.seafarersduluth@yahoo.com](mailto:www.seafarersduluth@yahoo.com).

## Leaving the grain trade after 41 years

After 41 years in the grain business, Mike Kylmala retired earlier this year. His last day as manager of Riverland Ag/Duluth Lake Port was Feb. 28, though his coworkers will tell you that he still stops by the waterfront from time to time to visit.



Kylmala

Kylmala's first job with the elevator (which at that time was owned by International Multifoods) was as a general laborer/sweeper. "Through the years, I did almost everything you could think of," he said recently. As a result, he gained expertise in all facets of the grain trade, which made him the perfect candidate to move into the office and become a supervisor in 1989. Two years later, the company was bought by AGP, and Kylmala was asked to stay on. In 2004, when Tom Miller retired, Kylmala became facility manager.

In just the past three years, the elevator has changed ownership (and its name) twice more — once when purchased by Whitebox Commodities in 2008 and again last year, when it was sold to Ceres Global Ag Corp. Currently, 14 individuals are working at Duluth Lake Port, including Brian Keup, the new facility manager.

## Duluth Aerial Bridge limits lifts

The U.S. Coast Guard has published a final rule in the Federal Register that limits openings of the Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge for most vessels that are under 300 gross tons.

Under the new permanent rules, bridge openings for boats under 300 gross tons will be limited to on the hour and the half hour between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. from the Friday before Memorial Day through the Tuesday after Labor Day each year.

Before the trial of the new program in 2010, the bridge was required to open on demand for any vessel, which many residents believed contributed to traffic delays and congestion in Canal Park and on Minnesota Point.

Certain boats are exempt from the new rule, including any vessel seeking shelter from severe weather, government vessels and those that support cargo ships that visit the port, as well as vessels engaged in rescue or emergency salvage operations. These rules do *not* apply to cargo ships (which are over 300 gross tons) and for which bridge lifts will remain available on demand.

Bridge tenders urge boat operators who need a lift during restricted times to hail the bridge on marine Channel 16 with their request. The bridge will open only for vessels that have called to request a lift.

For more information, contact the Aerial Bridge supervisor, Ryan Beamer, at [rbeamer@duluthmn.gov](mailto:rbeamer@duluthmn.gov).

## Port Passings

■ Walter E. "Wally" Thayer, 82, died on March 8. Thayer worked for the International Longshoreman's Association (ILA) before becoming a stevedore for Federal Marine Terminals, Inc. in 1971 and then retiring in 1983. He belonged to the ILA and the Independent Order of Foresters. Thayer is survived by his wife, Arla; daughters Judy (Daniel) Knight and Jo Ann (James) Remington; two granddaughters, a great-grandson and a sister.

■ John "Jack" Ward Sr., 84, of Proctor, died on March 29. At age 16, Ward went to work for the DM&IR Railroad as a clerk. After high school and service in the U.S. Navy, he returned to Proctor and his job with the railroad. He retired from DM&IR Labor Relations in 1983. Ward is survived by his wife Janice; children John (Sally) Jr., Mary (Roger) McLaren, Mick (Carol), Lisa (Rick) Jobin, Joe (Rachel), and Kris (Steve) Fremling; 20 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; two brothers and many other family members and friends.

# The well-traveled *Spruceglen*

By Ken Newhams

The Canadian-flag *Spruceglen* arrived in the Twin Ports on April 7 to load 58,000 tons of coal at Midwest Energy that was bound for Belledune, New Brunswick, a port on the Atlantic Ocean.

The 730-foot ship was built in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1983 as the *Selkirk Settler*. Canadian Steamship Lines owns and operates the *Spruceglen* now. She has sailed for many different owners, under five different names, with an impressive combination of flags, crews and trade routes.

I remember her for many delicious Indian meals I enjoyed onboard the ship when she was the *Federal Fraser* (1991-2001) and visited here many times with management and crew from India.

Many remember when she was the *Fraser* and failed to make the turn in the Duluth harbor to the Aerial Lift Bridge in the foggy early evening of Aug. 28, 2002. Instead of motoring under the bridge, she went aground in front of Bayfront Park, just behind the Paulucci Pavilion. The next day, tugs pulled her off the bottom and away from shore and she was able to depart the Port that evening, but not before she attracted quite a crowd.

Her travels over several months of 2004 and 2005 illustrate the business patterns of this ship, sailing the Great Lakes in ice-free months, the oceans in winter.

She arrived here on October 25, 2004, with a cargo of steel coils loaded in Antwerp. By then, she was a Canadian boat called the *Spruceglen* but still under charter to a company that operated a large fleet of saltwater ships.

That charter ended when the last steel coil was taken out of her cargo hold at the Port Terminal. Since she carried a foreign cargo, she was required to have a pilot onboard, as all foreign-flag vessels are in U.S. waters. With the last coil out, the pilot was no longer required.

The *Spruceglen* returned to normal Canadian routes, at least until she left Sorel, Canada, a couple of months later with grain for Halifax and Wilmington. She then went to Tampa Bay on January 14, 2005, to load phosphates and left for China, going through the Panama Canal on January 28.

The crew saw no land until the ship arrived in China 35 days later. After discharging the phosphate, the ship went into a five-year inspection at the drydock at Chengxi shipyard in Jiangyin, China.

On April 24, the *Spruceglen* left China light for Chile, this time stopping in Hawaii for fuel and water. She arrived in Chile on May 29, loaded salt and took it to New



The vessel now known as the *Spruceglen* was named the *Fraser* when, on Aug. 28, 2002, she ran aground when trying to leave the Duluth harbor. In photo at right, as the *Spruceglen*, she motors light through the Duluth Entry the following year.



Photos by Ken Newhams

Haven, Conn., and then entered the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway system for another summer season of loading grain, mostly out of Thunder Bay and Duluth.

She took grain to the St. Lawrence River, often bringing iron ore back into the Seaway to Canadian steel mills. Then back to Thunder Bay or Duluth for grain.

And so it went until the ice came in December. Then it was back out to the oceans of the world.

She continues to sail wherever her cargoes take her.

Ken Newhams is the founder of the *Duluth Shipping News*:  
[www.duluthshippingnews.com](http://www.duluthshippingnews.com) | [www.duluthboats.com](http://www.duluthboats.com)

# American Victory

## A World War II veteran soldiers on

By Jerry Sandvick

The sky over the island of Saipan was sunny on June 18, 1944, but there were enough cumulus clouds to help hide the Japanese aircraft attacking the U.S. fleet that had come to invade the island. The American force had already endured several aerial attacks, and on this day the Japanese came again with a nearly two-hour assault in mid-afternoon.

One ship that came under attack that day was the USS *Neshanic*, a fleet oiler (AO-71) that had the task of keeping the combat vessels topped off with fuel. At 4:41 p.m. several bombs landed close to the ship, and about a minute later a hundred-pounder hit her aft cargo deck amid drums of fuel oil.

The bomb did not, thankfully, pierce the deck. But the detonation ignited fires that caused serious burns to 33 of the *Neshanic's* crew members.

The fires were quickly controlled, and the ship's gunners got a measure of payback by shooting down two enemy aircraft, a Kawasaki "Tony"

and a Mitsubishi "Zero." The *Neshanic* went to Eniwetok for repairs, then back to work refueling the fleet, saw action off Iwo Jima and was in Tokyo Bay in September 1945.

The *Neshanic* earned several battle stars and they, with a Pacific Service Ribbon, are proudly carried on the vessel's upper works still today.

Now known as the *American Victory*, the former AO-71 has been a frequent caller in the Twin Ports and is now in long-term lay-up at Fraser Shipyards in Superior. *American Victory* has a history unique in the annals of Great Lakes freighters.

In 1936 Congress passed and President Roosevelt signed the Merchant Marine Act, aimed at rebuilding a U.S. merchant fleet that had badly declined since WWI. Joseph P. Kennedy, father of a future president, was appointed the first head of the U.S. Maritime Commission. The commission's task was to plan and subsidize the

building of an array of commercial vessels and, when war came to the U.S. in 1941, it would oversee the enormous ship construction program of WWII.

One of the commission's first pieces of business was a 1938 contract with Standard Oil of New Jersey to build 12 tankers. These tankers were intended for commercial use but with relatively little modification could be converted to the fleet oilers that the Navy would require in wartime.

By early 1942 it was clear that the U.S. Navy would have to fight a two-ocean war and that keeping the fleets at sea meant, first and foremost, refueling capability.

Working closely together, the Navy and the Maritime Commission launched a series of ships designated T3-S-A1, most prominent of them being the Chiwawa Class tankers, named after the lead ship, AO-68, USS *Chiwawa*. The fourth ship of the class was the USS *Neshanic*, AO-71.

She was built by Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point Shipyard in Maryland, launched in October 1942 and commissioned in February 1943. Her vitals were 502 feet overall length with a 68-foot beam and 27 foot draft. Gross tonnage was 10,340. Propulsion was provided by a steam turbine producing about 7,000 h.p. through a single screw, which gave her just over 15 knots maximum.

Conversion from civilian to war work largely involved installing the necessary tackle to refuel ships while underway, mounting an array of 20 mm and 40 mm anti-aircraft armament and adding mess



The fleet oiler 71 in 1943.

and berthing accommodations for the larger crew, which now totaled about 215 officers and men.

Her war service ended with decommissioning in November 1945. Her postwar career was, at one and the same time, colorful and tragic.

Struck from the Navy list in 1946, her ownership reverted to the Maritime Commission, which promptly sold her to the Gulf Oil Corporation, where she was named, logically enough, *Gulfoil*.

In 1958 the *Gulfoil* collided with a heavily laden gasoline tanker near Newport, R.I. The resulting fires burned on both ships for several hours and, though in ballast, a fume-filled tank on the *Gulfoil* exploded. It was a tragedy; 15 men, including the master, were dead, and the *Gulfoil* was a derelict.

The life of the ship was not over yet, however. The hulk was purchased by the Pioneer Steamship Company of Cleveland, which now converted her to use as a Great Lakes bulk carrier. About 280 feet of the wrecked center was cut out and scrapped, the pilot house was moved forward and a 510-by-75 foot center section was welded in between the salvaged stern and bow segments. The new center section had been built in Rotterdam and towed to the Baltimore yard that was doing the work.

The ship, now a 730-foot laker, went back to work in 1961 as the *Pioneer Challenger*.

Soon again, however, she ran afoul of Lady Luck. In July 1961, she struck a submerged object near Buffalo and suffered severe bottom damage. At about the same time Pioneer Steamship went out



The *Neshanic* as the *Pioneer Challenger*, in 1961.



The battle-tested former fleet oiler AO-71, now in long-term layup in Superior.

of business, and the *Pioneer* was acquired by Oglebay Norton's Columbia Transportation division.

Repaired at Fraser Shipyards in Superior, the ship went back into Great Lakes service in 1962 as the *Middletown*. An accident in 1978 resulted in a broken rudder stock, which was repaired at Lorain, Ohio.

Yet another tragedy befell the ship in 1986, when methane produced by a coal cargo exploded, killing the chief engineer and his assistant.

By the 1980s straight-deck bulk freighters had given way to the far more efficient self-unloaders and, in 1982, the *Middletown* was converted into that configuration.

The most recent change in this

historic ship's story came in 2006, when the Oglebay Norton Company decided to liquidate its shipping business, and the American Steamship Company purchased six vessels for a total of \$120 million.

*Middletown* became the *American Victory*, and she is still capable of carrying Great Lakes cargo — 69 years after she was launched.

The ship's original AO-71 designation is still displayed on her bow. Her builders may have thought they were building for the duration of the war, but they built a ship that would last well into the next century.

*Jerry Sandvick is a historian, professor emeritus of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and president of the Lake Superior Marine Museum Association.*



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