



# Meet the Crew

## THE HODDERS

### Father-son team join Captain Bill Beatty

BY PATRICK LAPINSKI

The *Maritime Trader* has shifted across Thunder Bay harbor from the Richardson Elevator to the Mission Terminal to finish loading. The *Trader* is attracting a lot of attention on the Lakes this year. Outwardly, the vessel's brilliant blue livery is hard to miss, bringing a predictably keen reminder to Canadians of the once mighty Misener fleet. Closer to home, the *Maritime Trader* is still remembered fondly at the Canadian Lakehead as the *Mantadoc*, a member of the locally-owned Paterson fleet.

It is late afternoon at the Mission. The draft marks on the hull of the *Trader* are dropping beneath the waterline. On the deck of the *Maritime Trader*, it's all business where Second Mate Trevor Hodder directs loading the vessel. A grain trimmer positions one of the straw-shaped loading spouts into a corner of the cargo hold before releasing a stream of grain. The cargo—canola, a black seed grain tinged with flecks of gold—flows onto the top of the pile.

Trevor hails from the Maritime Province of Newfoundland. He stands about six feet tall, from his boots to the top of his hardhat. In his early 20s, Trevor is well below the median age for mates on the Great Lakes. Dressed in multicolored layers of shirt, sweatshirt and jacket, his slight figure suggests that he has yet to succumb to the hearty rigors of ship food. Trevor is a recent graduate of the Marine Institute at Memorial University in St. Johns, Newfoundland. While the college is geared for the Atlantic fisheries and offshore sailing, Trevor was given the opportunity to sail the Great Lakes and has come to enjoy the region.

"It's getting hard to make a living by fishing," he acquiesced, saying he plans to stay on the Lakes rather than join the Canadian fishery industry.

No one on the ship could offer better testimony to that topic than AB Wheelman Bob Hodder, of Marystown, Newfoundland. Bob came onto the Great Lakes this past September, after 42 years of fishing on the Atlantic Coast. A decline in the fishery has found Bob in familiar, yet unfamiliar territory. Being at sea, on boats, for long stretches of time are the familiar, but on the Lakes all of the ports and cargoes

are unique. The best part of his job on the *Maritime Trader* is the chance to work with, and for, his son Trevor.

"Watching him do his job and seeing how he interacts with everyone gives me a whole new perspective of him," said Bob, as Trevor directed activity on the deck. "And he's the boss too! I have to do what he tells me now. I'm really proud of him."

In command of the *Maritime Trader* during this inaugural season is Bill Beatty, who has spent almost his entire life on the water, beginning with the Canadian Coast Guard. Most of his career on the Lakes was with Algoma Central Marine. Beatty's first licensed job was on the *R. Bruce Angus*. Over the next 30 years, he climbed his way up the ladder, patiently biding time for a master's position. In the large Algoma fleet there was always plenty of work, but there were also many peers ahead of Beatty on the seniority roster.

fleets. It was a leap of faith that landed him right where he wanted to be, as Master of the 610 foot *Maritime Trader*.

Just over a year later, Beatty is walking the deck of the *Trader* as it loads at Mission Terminal. Standing over six feet tall, he looks trim and fit. His beard has grayed over the years, but his eyes are active and alert with the work of being a Captain. He wears a lightweight coat now, no longer needing the heavy coveralls of someone spending hours on deck in any kind of weather. While he has fun chatting with grain trimmers and elevator personnel, old friends from his many years on the Lakes, he does so with a keen sense of knowledge and responsibility to make sure his vessel gets loaded properly for its trip to the Lower Lakes.

In his lengthy career, Beatty has seen many changes come across the Lakes. His



Captain Bill Beatty



Bob Hodder works with and for his son, Trevor Hodder



By the 1990s, vessel attrition and crew reductions made it even more difficult to move up. As the opportunities diminished with each passing year, it seemed Beatty's only chance to command his own ship would be a small miracle.

Expecting a sailor to rely upon divine intervention is not a story line worthy of much attention around the Lakes. The formation of a new shipping company is, however. In 2005, Voyageur Marine Transport caught the attention of many on the Great Lakes when it entered the Canadian shipping industry with the acquisition of two bulk carriers. Many veteran sailors, looking for a way to invigorate a stalled career or for just a fresh start, jumped at the chance to crew the vessels. After nearly 40 years with Algoma, Beatty realized he may not ever have a better chance to fulfill his dream, so he too jumped

voice echoes the disappointment of longtime sailors at the loss of vessels, most of them inevitable casualties to age. A trend on the Great Lakes is the lack of new construction, so for every ship gone there are multiple jobs lost, a fact that Captain Beatty believes goes largely unnoticed by anyone not directly associated with the Great Lakes maritime industry.

"If a plant on shore closes and 200 jobs are eliminated, it's all over the news headlines" he said. "Out here, when a ship goes away no one notices, but that's roughly 20 jobs."

As he looks down the deck of the *Maritime Trader*, Beatty knows what a hard fought life it has been to earn his position. He is thankful to Voyageur Marine for creating a niche market for not only aging ships, but for veteran seafarers as well. ■