

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Legend Lives On

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Arguably the most famous Lake Superior shipwreck, November 10th marked another year since the tragic sinking of the SS Edmund Fitzgerald in 1975. While the anniversary of the ill-fated ship's wreck may have slipped by unnoticed for some, the legacy of the freighter is a story that deserves reflection.

Commissioned by Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company as a "maximum sized" Great Lakes ore freighter and named after the company's chairman of the board, the ship's maiden voyage was June 8, 1958 at River Rouge, Michigan.

Known as "the Big Fitz," at 729 feet long and 13,632 tons, she was the largest carrier on the Great Lakes at that time. The Fitzgerald was a record-breaking powerhouse, frequently surpassing her own records. In 1964, she was the first carrier to haul over a million tons of taconite through the locks at Sault St. Marie, and in 1969 she was recognized with a safety award for achieving eight years of operation without a worker injury requiring time-off.

On Nov. 9, 1975, under the command of Captain Ernest McSorley, the SS Edmund Fitzgerald left Superior, Wisconsin at about 2:30 p.m. for a steel mill near Detroit, Michigan. She was carrying 26,116 tons of taconite iron ore and 29 crew members.

The Fitzgerald was later joined by the SS Arthur M. Anderson, which was destined for Gary, Indiana under the command of Captain Bernie Cooper.

In contact with each other and aware of a building November storm, both captains decided to take a more northerly route across Lake Superior. Familiar with the November Witch, the term for the windy storms that cross the Great Lakes each autumn, neither captain could have foreseen the tempest that lay ahead.

Gale warnings were issued that evening and by the early morning hours of November 10th they were upgraded to storm warnings. Winds of 60 mph whipped the freighter, while 10 foot waves crashed.

By then, the faster Fitzgerald had taken the lead, with the Anderson following about 10 to 15 miles behind. Around 2 p.m. on the 10th, the storm center passed over the ships. The winds shifted, with gusts near hurricane-force. Waves increased to 25 ft., with some as high as 35 ft., it began to snow.

The waves were so tall they interfered with the radar and the Anderson had trouble keeping sight of the Fitzgerald. McSorley noted at one point that it was the "worst seas" he had ever experienced.

Around 3 p.m., Captain McSorley radioed the Anderson that the Fitz was taking on water and had begun to list. McSorley would slow his ship to allow the Anderson to close the gap between them and stay near.

Shortly after 4 p.m., McSorley reported radar failure and minor damage, with both pumps going. For the next three hours, communication between the ships consisted of navigational assistance.

At 7:10 p.m., Captain McSorley spoke his last known words, "We are holding our own." Five minutes later the Fitz disappeared from the Anderson's radar and never reappeared. Just 17 miles from shelter at Whitefish Bay, the Fitz sank and lost her entire crew of 29 men.

The Anderson, despite arriving at a safe port, headed back into the storm to search for the Fitz. Search vessels found only lifeboats, life jackets, and debris. The wreck was discovered in

May 1976 by a submersible 530 feet below Lake Superior's surface.

Most of the wreck of the SS Edmund Fitzgerald remains undisturbed, as it is protected under several laws that make it illegal to

visit the site without proper permissions. These laws were designed to protect underwater cultural heritage sites and surrounding ecosystems.

There have been rare instances where small artifacts have been recovered legally with consent from the appropriate authorities, primarily for educational purposes or preservation in museums.

The Fitzgerald's 200 lbs. bronze bell was recovered on July 4, 1995, and is now on display in the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum in Michigan as a memorial to her lost crew.

No victim has ever been recovered, making the wreck both a memorial and a tomb. Family members have expressed their desires to leave their loved ones in their "natural grave."

While the Coast Guard reported the ship sank due to ineffective hatch closures, there are several interesting, yet conflicting theories such as rogue waves and grounding on a shoal.

The shipwreck shrouded in mystery, with unanswered questions surrounding the circumstances of the Fitz's demise and the inexplicable absence of a distress signal, was ampli-

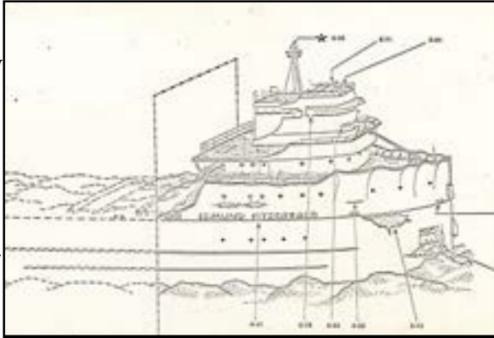


The SS Edmund Fitzgerald in 1958. Original photographer unknown. Photo from UWS Special Collections & Archives

fied by Gordon Lightfoot's 1976 powerful ballad, "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald." The shanty-like tune brought the story of the Fitzgerald into the national spotlight, contributing to the doomed freighter's lasting legacy.

Though the Fitzgerald sank 49 years ago, it remains a haunting reminder of the power of Lake Superior and the sailors who brave those treacherous waters.

For more information on the SS Edmund Fitzgerald, visit UWS' Maritime Collection at the Jim Dan Hill Library.



A drawing depicting some of the damage done to the SS Edmund Fitzgerald from its wreck. Unknown artist, undated. Photo from UWS Special Collections & Archives

Senior Commentary

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Back in May of 2021, I moved out of my parents house, in Radisson, Wis., into the dorms at UW-Superior. I thought my collegiate career would lead me to the path of becoming an art teacher, but right before my semester started I switched majors completely. Little did I know that this switch would propel me forward to living almost a lifetime worth of experience in a career in journalism.

I didn't know we had a Multimedia Journalism course, likewise I didn't know filmmaking was offered. But I took a chance. I made a few videos back in high school for projects, and besides art, that's all I really all I knew that I enjoyed doing.

Now three and a half years later, I can't see myself doing anything different in my life. I was quick to join our campus' newspaper, just as quick to apply as a production assistant in local television. Before I took my first reporting class I already was the assistant editor of the Promethean. Before my returning back for my sophomore year, I was my tv station's only weekend reporter.

I'm not one to believe in coincidences. I tend to think people work towards and advance into their position. But everything worked out better than I could have imagined.

I'm equally surprised how things worked out in both degrees. I've been a part of a few local commercial and film productions through outside work with

the Upper Midwest Film Office. I've once slept in a hammock in Chisom, Minn., a place I've never been to before, all for a short film workshop during a chilly October weekend.

Probably my biggest sense of accomplishment has come from the media I've produced in and around our campus's film department. My first two short films, Ink of the Black Gloves and Metamodernity, only further solidified that I made the right choice a week before I actually started classes fall of 2021.

My time here at UWS felt short-lived, but it feels more like a lifetime of learning and fun. I met some of my best friends here on campus, this campus gave me the tools to jointly better a career and my education. It didn't come without any hardships, I don't know if I'll ever be able to finish that documentary I was making back in spring of 2023. It was hard doing 18 credits, a film, all during the semester my close grandmother died. But I still passed, mostly.

I have one more semester left, one more incomplete to make up. I may not be as around on campus as I used to. But I'm excited for my life to have a soft restart after receiving both of my BA's in Multimedia Journalism and Digital Filmmaking. For now, I'm a student and the morning technical director at KQDS Fox21, but no matter where I go, I'll have a camera and microphone on my side waiting to tell that next film or story.

REVIEW|Slice of Superior Jon Pearson jpears22@uwsuper.edu

#5 Superior Waffle
When searching for the best pizza in Superior I didn't have any trouble finding different options for pizza but I wanted to think outside the box and this is when I found that Superior Waffle was selling a pizza waffle and to my surprise it was delicious with all of its novelty. The nice and fluffy waffle was covered in all of the classic pizza toppings cheese, sauce, and pepperoni they all surprisingly complemented each other nicely in a nice blend of sweet and savory flavors. 6/10

#4 Vintage Italian Pizza
This slice of pizza has an airy fluffy crust and a unique sauce that starts off nice but ends with a tangy final note. The pepperoni is cooked to perfection 6.5/10

#3 The UWS Union Cafe
Has a nice doughy crust, thin crispy cut pepperoni, and minimal sauce. This pizza is super consistent and nice when you are in a rush. 7/10

#2 Toppers
When starting my pizza journey earlier this semester the first place I stumbled upon was Toppers. I was instantly pulled in by the different styles of toppings such as pickles and tater tots so, I decided to make Toppers my first stop. The pepperoni is cooked to a very crunchy crisp and the cheese and crust are cooked evenly across the entire pie. 8/10



Never judge a pizza by its toppings! Photo by Jon Pearson | The Promethean



#1 Pizza Man
Is a classic pub style pizza, sweet sauce,

pizza construction is different going dough, sauce pep. then cheese. The sweet sauce reminds me of my hometown pizza joint. 9/10



Multiple "45s" with songs about the wreck were made and are kept at UWS. Photo from UWS Special Collections & Archives



Similarly, never judge a pizza by its cover! Photo by Jon Pearson | The Promethean