The Edmund Fitzgerald

At the time it was launched in 1958, the 729-foot long, 75-foot wide freighter S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald was the largest ship to ply the Great Lakes. On November 10, 1975 the Fitzgerald left Superior, Wisconsin carrying 26,000 tons of iron ore pellets, bound for Detroit. Though the day was bright, in her path lay a terrible storm with 60 MPH winds and waves in excess of 15 feet. As the storm built, her experienced Captain Ernest McSorley bore north across Lake Superior, seeking the relative shelter of the Canadian shore and Whitefish Bay.

Luck was not with the ship or the crew. The radar system and its backup failed. The storm took out the power to Whitefish Point's light and radio beacon. Though the light was brought back on line, the radio beacon was not. The Arthur M. Anderson, another ship within 10 miles of the Fitzgerald, received reports that the ship was listing to the starboard and of other structural damages to the vessel. At 7:10 PM, Captain McSorley delivered what was to be his final message: "We're holding our own." The Arthur M. Anderson lost the Fitzgerald's image on its radar screensat 7:25 PM. The ship and crew of 29 men, sank to the bottom of Lake Superior.

Several expeditions have been mounted to the wreck and have been the subject of some controversy. On July 4th, 1995 the ship's bell and stanchion were recovered from where they lay beneath 550 feet of Lake Superior. A replica of the bell, graven with the names of the crew, was left in its place. The bell was presented to the relatives of the crew and rung thirty times -- once for each member of the crew and a final time in honor of all those who have lost their lives at sea. The bell was given to the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point to serve as a memorial to the ship and crew.