

30TH ANNIVERSARY
"THE LEGEND LIVES ON..."
DIVING THE EDMUND FITZGERALD

November 10 was the 30th anniversary of the sinking of the Great Lakes carrier *Edmund Fitzgerald*. It's reasonable to expect that the *Fitz* would be just about forgotten by now - but, as you will learn, she certainly hasn't followed a reasonable course.

Every November, a surprisingly large number of groups, societies, and individuals who live on or near the Great Lakes gather to remember the *Fitzgerald*, to extol her virtues, to mourn her lost crew and to conjecture, endlessly, on the many mysteries that surround her sinking. In many ways, the *Fitz* is like *Titanic* - she sails on in mariner's folklore and, if anything, her legend grows as each decade passes.

But, many DIVER readers are in their 20s and 30s (lucky SOB!) and were either not yet born or were small children when that incredible storm in the late autumn of 1975 struck the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and sent her to the bottom of Lake Superior. Most of you will have heard the popular recording *Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* and, perhaps, will have been slightly surprised at the emotion it evokes - even at first hearing. And it's also likely that, as divers, you know more about the *Fitz* than the average couch potato. For those that do not . . . a short discourse is in order:

FITZGERALD

Thirty years later the *Edmund Fitzgerald* has lost little, if any, of its mystique. Immortalized in song by Canadian Gordon Lightfoot, the loss of this Great Lakes ore carrier is a story retold in haunting lyrics:

"And every man knew, as the Captain did, too, T'was the witch of November
come stealing...
...The church bell chimed, 'til it rang 29 times. For each man on
the *Edmund Fitzgerald*..."

In this exclusive feature, publisher Phil Nuytten recalls his unforgettable experience...



THE SHIP

The *Edmund Fitzgerald* was launched in 1958 and, at 729 feet (222m), she was the largest vessel ever built for service on the Great Lakes. It is said that at the time of her launch she was the largest manmade object afloat in any body of freshwater in the world. Certainly, she was the pride of the American Great Lakes fleet. Unless you live and work around the lakes, it's difficult to realize and appreciate the significance or fame of the *Fitzgerald*. San Francisco has the Golden Gate Bridge, New York has the Statue of Liberty, and the Great Lakes had the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. It would be nearly two decades after her launch that another vessel of comparable size plied the Great Lakes. By then, the *Fitzgerald* was firmly established as the 'Empire State Building' of lake vessels.

Although the rest of the nation would come to know this ship from the hit song by Canadian songwriter and performer Gordon Lightfoot, the people from Superior to Sault St. Marie, from Thunder Bay to Duluth, from Detroit to Chicago, knew her as their own.

THE STORM

On November 9, 1975, *Fitzgerald* left Superior, Wisconsin, carrying 26,000 tons of taconite pellets, used to make iron. Ernest McSorley, a 44-year veteran of the Lakes, captained her. The weather that morning was unusually mild: the sun shone and the lake surface was glassy smooth. The 'Storms of November' seemed far away from the 29 men aboard the giant *Fitzgerald*. Although an early forecast had identified a strong weather system approaching Lake Superior - with northeast winds and waves up to 15 feet (4.5m) - no one could have imagined its real force.

What happened was the northeast winds ran smack into an arctic front, heading down from Canada. As these two weather systems collided, the temperature plunged from well over 60°F (15.5°C) to below freezing. By evening the winds had risen to 50 knots, a full out storm! The winds continued to increase in speed and by the early morning of November 10, they had increased to 70 knots. By that afternoon, the winds were reported to be in excess of 90 knots - it was a howling gale of unprecedented size. Twenty-foot waves were crashing across *Fitzgerald's* cargo deck, already low in the water with her heavy load. Ice was forming everywhere, making her dangerously top heavy. By nightfall, waves had risen to a height not easily estimated, but they were high enough to completely incapacitate the *Fitzgerald's* radar. She was now blind in the maelstrom.

Captain McSorley radioed to a following vessel, the Arthur M. *Anderson* that he could not raise the White point station on his RDF (radio direction finder). With the radar out, and now the RDF down, he was, essentially, without navigation, save for his compass in the heaving sea.

A short while later, McSorley responded to the query radioed by Captain Bernie Cooper of the *Anderson*. He said, "We are taking heavy seas over our decks - it is the worst sea that I've ever been in - we have a bad list and our radar is completely gone."

The *Anderson's* Captain had his own hands full and shortly after the communication with the *Fitzgerald*, the *Anderson* was engulfed by two enormous stern waves - the largest that they had ever seen. Realizing that these same waves were racing towards the *Fitzgerald* - only 10 miles (16km) away - Cooper radioed *Fitzgerald* to ask their status.

Captain McSorley replied, "We are holding our own - we are holding our own."

These were the last words heard from the pride of the Great Lakes fleet and her crew of 29 men. Moments later, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* vanished from the *Anderson's* radar.

Repeated attempts to re-establish radio contact brought no response.

THE SEARCH

November 14, 1975, four days after the presumed sinking of the *Fitzgerald*, the 180-foot (55m) Coast Guard cutter *Woodrush* located two targets thought to be the wreck of the *Fitzgerald*. The cutter's side-scan sonar delineated the two objects, each approximately 300 feet (91m) in length, laying about 250 feet (76m) apart. The water depth was given at 530 feet (161.5m). A U.S. Navy aircraft equipped with powerful magnetometer gear confirmed a magnetic contact at the sonar site located by *Woodrush* and observed an oil slick at that location. A week later, a Falls Church, Virginia, maritime contracting company called Seaward Inc. was brought in to redo the survey using more sophisticated sonar systems. *Woodrush* was pressed into service a third time and

THE DIVES

1975 - 1995

May 12, 1976

Although the sonar targets recorded were thought to be the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, no positive visual identification had been made of the wreck. The search vessel *Woodrush* set out for a third time and relocated the wreckage by sonar and navigational fixes, set anchor stations, and deployed the US Navy's ROV *CURV III* (cable-controlled underwater vehicle) into the depths of Lake Superior. The *CURV* was an early version of what would now be described as a work-class ROV. It weighed in at 2.5 tons and carried two black and white television cameras and a hydraulic manipulator on its 15-foot frame.

As the ROV reached the first of the sonar targets, technicians watched intently as the shipwreck's battered hull appeared on their screen. It was, indeed, the *Fitzgerald*. Twelve dives were carried out, 59 hours of videotape were recorded on site and nearly a thousand colour photographs were taken as well. This enormous quantity of survey data was turned over to the National Transportation Safety Board to review. The result: Report No. NTSB-MAR-78-3, titled '*SS Edmund Fitzgerald Sinking in Lake Superior, November 19, 1975.*' Many marine experts considered this document inconclusive. Even the four-man review board had dissenting opinions on the probable cause of the sinking.

September 24, 1980

Ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau's vessel *Calypso* was in the St. Lawrence Seaway making a film in conjunction with the National Film Board of Canada. *Calypso* went to the wreck site and, directed by Jean-Michel Cousteau, conducted a brief submersible dive on the forward section. The submersible *SP350* was more widely known as the 'Diving Saucer' (Soucoupe) although the *Calypso* crew referred to her as 'Denise'. The 1,000-foot-rated (305m), water jet-propelled vehicle was slightly over eight feet (2.5m) in diameter and carried pilot and passenger - Albert Falco and Colin Meunier, respectively - on this half-hour dive. Jean-Michel Cousteau later said that no conclusions could be reached on such a short dive, but that Falco believed that the ship might well have separated while on the surface.



Seaward Inc. made more than 300 sonar runs over a three day period, in spite of very bad weather. Subsequent reduction of the mass of data caused the experts to conclude that the wreckage evident from the sonar was, in fact, the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

MARCH 1995

For me, it started with a call from Emory Kristof, my old friend from National Geographic Magazine. He and I and Joe MacInnis had spent a lot of time together on various underwater expeditions - most notably, on Joe's multi-year saga to locate and document the most northerly known shipwreck, *Breadalbane*. Emory's photograph of me coming back through the arctic ice after the first dive in the armored diving suit 'Wasp' made the cover of National Geographic in 1983 - so I owed him one!

Now, more than a decade later, he was calling about another shipwreck - very different from *Breadalbane* - this time it was the famous *Edmund Fitzgerald*. I was familiar with dives made on her the previous summer from my talks with MacInnis (see The Dives sidebar). Emory quickly brought me up to date on a plan by Tom Farnquist, curator of the Great Lakes Ship Wreck Museum, to recover the ship's 200 pound (91kg) bronze bell. It was to become a memorial to *Fitzgerald's* 29 crewmen. The families of the crew were firmly on side with the project and they were keen to see the bell recovered in the coming summer.

Farnquist and his proposed expedition had been challenged in court by a *Fitzgerald* shipwreck buff named Fred Shannon, who had his own plan to shoot a documentary film on the wreck. Shannon had applied for an injunction to prevent the raising of the bell, but the court decided in favour of Farnquist.

Emory's involvement in all this was in the form of a deal he had made to document the whole thing in High Definition video. 'Hi-Def.' I'd read about it in Videography Magazine, but I didn't know there were any systems outside of Japan. Turns out, there was one - Emory had it - and now he wanted to know if my company, Can-Dive, would provide its Newtsuit system and crew to carry out the recovery dives. I said, "Do bears have picnics in the woods?" or something similar.

After our initial discussion I got to thinking about the people opposed to the bell recovery, and had an idea. I called Emory back: "How about casting an exact replica of the bell to replace the original, with a plaque bearing the names of the crewmen?" He loved it and said, "I'll see if I can get the (bell) plans through Tom. Can you get a quote from a foundry there?" Sure I could. I called Joe MacInnis and we talked about the duplicate bell and plaque and before I knew it Joe said, "No, put the names on the bell!" Of course, I should have thought of that myself. I called Farnquist and we cut a deal on the Newtsuit.

Six months later, I was in a Canadian Navy Pisces-class submersible and heading for the wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

JULY 3, 1995-ABOARD THE SUBMERSIBLE PISCES 4

Our dive plan was to descend to the lakebed on the port side of the bow section of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

P-4's sonar acquired the two large targets that were the bow and stern sections of the *Fitz* almost as soon as we started our descent. P-4's pilot, Phil Frazier, oriented the sub so that our touch down heading would then take us to the port bow. A few minutes later we were sitting on the lake floor at a depth of 540 feet (165m). The polar-scanning sonar screen clearly showed the bow section - or about 300 feet (91m) of it - sitting on its keel with only a slight list to port and aft. The stern section, some 200 feet (61m) long, lies upside down about 200 feet (61m) aft of the bow section. 200 plus feet (61m) of the *Fitzgerald* exists only as debris.

As we moved toward the wreck I pushed 'play' on my cassette recorder and the first notes of Gordon Lightfoot's paean to the wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* filled the air. Visibility was pretty good at about 30 feet (9m). The powerful 400 Watt HMI lights fitted to P-4 by National Geographic for these dives were nothing short of amazing and soon wreckage of the great ship came into view.

Images of *Fitzgerald* began to fill the whole screen as the pilot quietly said, "Taconite to starboard." I saw the round taconite pellets - each about the size of a small marble - scattered by the thousands on the lakebed and realized the hull section was close. I wanted to get some video of the first sighting, so I looked away

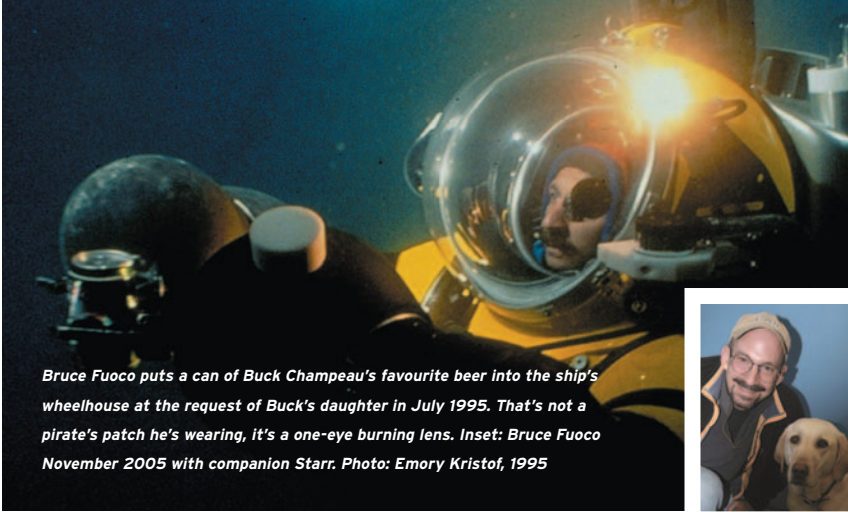
from the acrylic view port to check that my camera was ready. The sub pilot began to shift the sub's battery box astern to bring the bow up and I had to reposition the cassette recorder as our angle steepened. By the time I got back to the view port we were running forward, parallel to the port side about level with the centre deck. My first reaction was of shock - paint on the hull looked so fresh it seemed the ship could have sunk the week before, not 20 years past. My reaction must have been audible because Phil Frazier, our pilot, asked, "Everything OK?" Sheepishly, I explained that I was an ocean guy and instinctively expected to see marine growth. Still, I would never have dreamt her look would be that... well... 'fresh.' Frazier smiled and said, "Yeah, it's the depth and temperature, there isn't even any obvious algae."

The dark hull became white-painted superstructure as we headed towards the bridge. Lightfoot's voice filled the small sub: "Superior sings in the rooms of her ice-water mansions..." just as the black letters came into view, stark against the white side of the pilothouse. First "A", "D", then "L"... the hair stood on my forearms. An "A", then an "R"... in a few moments I could see the whole name *Edmund Fitzgerald* just below the blown-in windows of the pilot house. Lightfoot's voice continued, "the legend lives on from the Chippewa on down, of the big lake they call Gitche Gumee..." I have goose bumps on my arms as I write this, a decade later. Today, that moment - the images of *Edmund Fitzgerald* viewed to the strains of Lightfoot's song - is as bright and crisp in my mind as ever. Time has neither diminished nor blurred the memory.

We came level with the pilothouse roof and the instrument deck formed by that roof. The wind speed and direction mast, the radio direction finder mast, the radio antennas, all were there. And in amongst them was the stanchion that held our objective: the bell of the *Fitzgerald*. Pisces 4 came alongside the three taut wires that were the instrument deck railing, reached out with its hydraulic manipulator and locked it onto an upright pipe stanchion. Our thruster noise stopped and all was still, save for the soft hiss of the life support O2 and the low crackle of the UQC, our wireless communication link to the surface.

The bell was lit with the two 400 Watt HMI lights, the Lumen equivalent of 2000 Watts of regular incandescent or quartz lighting. Frazier switched in our centre 1200 Watt HMI beam and it was as though the sun had penetrated 500 feet (152m) of inky water! I said something profound like, "Holy cow! Emory is going to pee his pants when he sees this." Emory was in the second navy submersible, SDL-1 (Submersible Diver Lock-out 1). Ours was the lighting sub. A number of firsts were about to take place in the next half hour, and here's how some of the dive participants later reported the events.

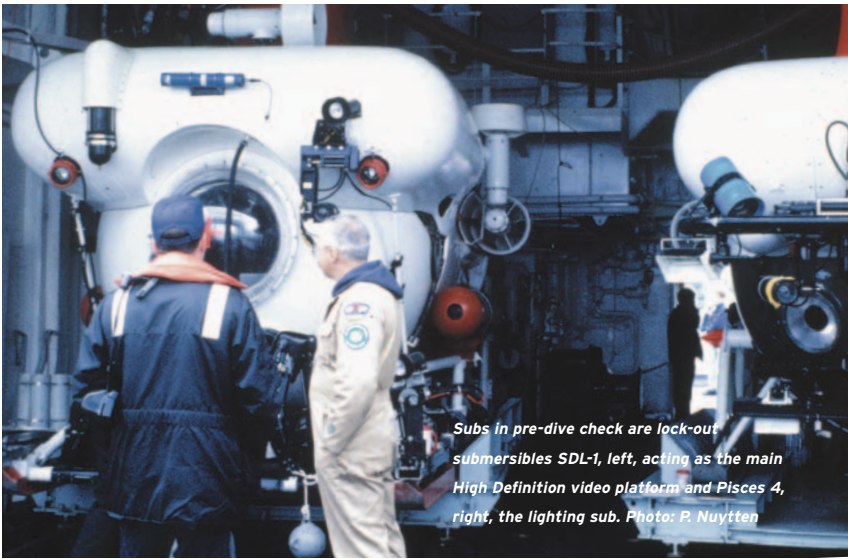
Jeff Cree, a multiple Emmy-award winning video recordist was in charge of the prototype high-definition video



Bruce Fuoco puts a can of Buck Champeau's favourite beer into the ship's wheelhouse at the request of Buck's daughter in July 1995. That's not a pirate's patch he's wearing, it's a one-eye burning lens. Inset: Bruce Fuoco November 2005 with companion Starr. Photo: Emory Kristof, 1995

August 23, 1989

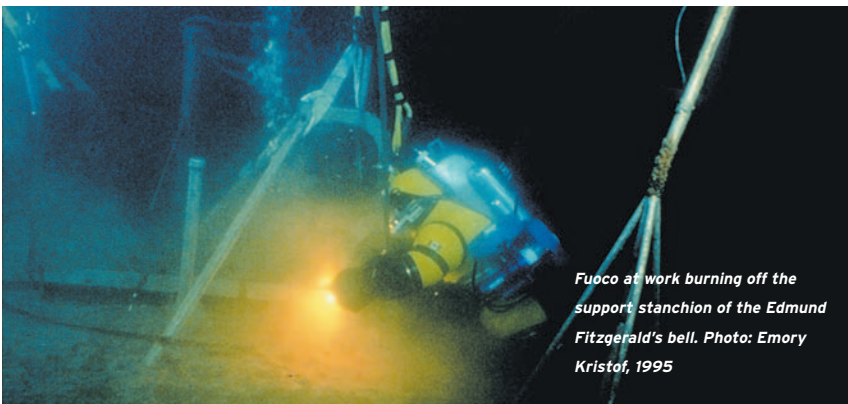
Under the auspices of the Michigan Sea Grant, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's vessel *R.V. Grayling* was utilized by a troupe of experts from NOAA (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration), National Geographic Society, Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society, US Army Corps, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Their purpose was to conduct another survey of the *Fitzgerald*. A smaller, more advanced ROV system developed by Chris Nicholson of Deep Diving Systems International, out of Falmouth, Massachusetts, was utilized this time. It worked flawlessly for three full days and yielded almost five hours of excellent video footage. Although discovery of a 3-foot wide (1m) hole on the starboard bow of the wreck was news, it gave no indication to the surface observer how it might have contributed to the sinking of the vessel.



Subs in pre-dive check are lock-out submersibles SDL-1, left, acting as the main High Definition video platform and Pisces 4, right, the lighting sub. Photo: P. Nuytten

July 1994

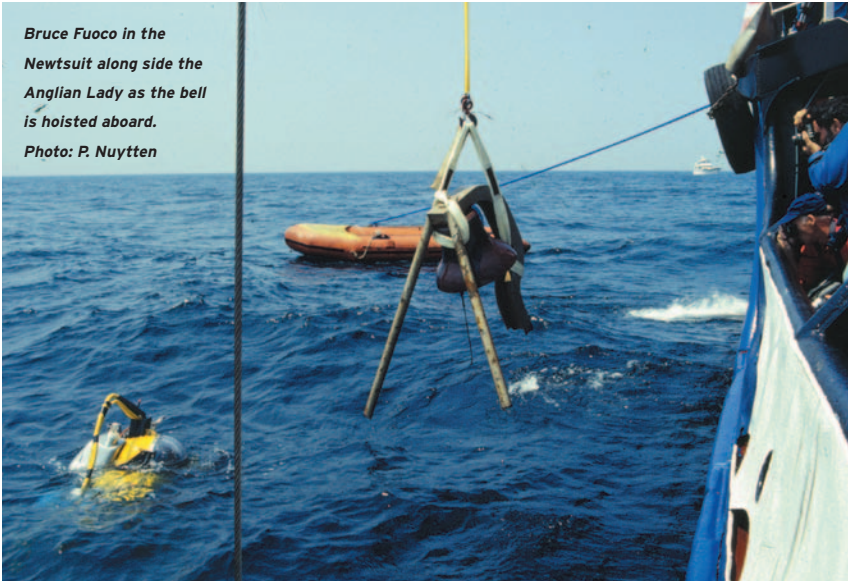
The project was called simply 'Great Lakes '94.' It was backed by the Harbour Branch Oceanographic Foundation of Fort Pierce, Florida, and was organized by well-known Canadian explorer, author and environmentalist, Dr. Joe MacInnis. The plan was to spend six weeks operating from the Harbour Branch vessel *Edwin A. Link*, knitting together a number of scientific projects in the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Great Lakes. MacInnis also planned a series of dives to the *Fitzgerald*. He was hoping the lure of this legendary wreck would draw a television audience that would also come to appreciate the real science being done on their overall project.



Fuoco at work burning off the support stanchion of the Edmund Fitzgerald's bell. Photo: Emory Kristof, 1995

The *Sea Link* launched a submersible named *Celia* - a 1,000-foot (305m) rated Perry Oceanographics PC 1204 sub that had been refitted and renamed by Harbor Branch just two years previously. A total of six dives were made over a three-day period and both the bow and stern sections of *Fitzgerald* were carefully examined and imaged, producing a detailed site map of the two main sections and the wreckage in between. Much was learned from these detailed observations but no conclusion was reached. As MacInnis wrote later, "We had a picture, but the picture didn't have an explanation."

Bruce Fuoco in the Newtsuit along side the Anglian Lady as the bell is hoisted aboard. Photo: P. Nuytten



July/August 1994

A few weeks after the *Celia* dives from the *Edwin A. Link*, a 'Fitz' buff named Fred Shannon paid out a reported \$75,000 to hire a support vessel and the 15-foot (4.5m) long, California-based submersible *Delta* to dive on the *Fitzgerald*. Shannon was the owner and manager of Metro-Media Entertainment, which he operated out of his residence in Flint, Michigan. He was also a one-time friend, but, later, bitter rival of Tom Farnquist, co-founder of the Whitefish Point Shipwreck Museum. That Farnquist had gone down to the 'Fitz' as a passenger



system from Japan's Sony Electronics. It was one of only two in existence at that time, and its use on that occasion marked the first time high definition (HD) was employed in underwater imaging. Cree later explained to the Society of Camera Operators:

"The success of deep water projects is largely dependent upon acquiring a proper operating platform. In this case we needed interior space sufficiently large to support the HDVS (high definition video system) equipment, including enough battery capacity to run the video equipment and lighting system for prolonged periods.

Since the wreck settled in Canadian waters, Kristof enlisted the aid of the Canadian Navy's 245-foot (75m) *HMCS Cormorant*, which housed two submersibles that were capable of the task.

SDL-1, a five-man submersible could provide the space and power required for use as the camera platform. Pisces IV could be used as a second light source. Kristof then contacted Phil Nuytten of International Hard Suits Inc. about the use of a Newsuit.

This one-atmosphere diving system is known for its full articulation and was capable of diving more than 1,000 feet (305m). Unlike the two submersibles it would be perfect for maneuvering in the tight confines between the tower and the many antennas atop the *Fitzgerald*.

Nuytten arranged for his most experienced pilot Bruce Fuoco to be available for the dives. Fuoco's unique experience operating the required torch in 500-foot (152m) depths would later prove invaluable. Once the rig-support tug *Anglian Lady* was secured as a work platform for the Newsuit all the elements were in place to remove the ship's bell from the *Edmund Fitzgerald*."

Bruce Fuoco was International Hard Suit's lead Newsuit pilot in 1995. Fuoco had been a skilled construction and oilfield diver for Can-Dive, Canada's largest commercial diving company. When Can-Dive began ADS (Atmospheric Diving Suit) operations, using the patented Newsuit, Fuoco was transferred to Can-Dive's subsidiary, Hard Suits, and assigned the task of diving operations supervisor. He was one of the first ADS pilots and developed his skill to the point where he became the factory test pilot and the lead trainer of new ADS pilots. Here's his accounting:

EDMUND FITZGERALD EXPEDITION 1995 - DIVE REPORT

Two Newsuit systems, Suit 25 and Suit 28, were used on the bell recovery expedition. The systems, owned and operated by Can-Dive, are one-atmosphere diving suits with an operating depth limit of 1,000 feet (305m). The Newsuit allows its pilot to remain at surface pressure, thereby eliminating any need for decompression. The pilot can remain at depth for up to 54 hours, the duration of the self-contained life-support system, after which he can surface immediately without any risk of decompression sickness or the bends. A normal working dive usually runs two to six hours, however, the extended life-support is available in case of an emergency.

Suits 25 and 28 were operated from the surface support vessel *Anglian Lady*, owned and operated by Purvis Marine, out of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. A three-point mooring was used to hold the support vessel on location over the wreck while the Newsuit performed its tasks.

We did a total of six dives on the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. Our initial dive on the site was on July 2, to survey the bow section and establish a down-line to the work area. On the afternoon of July 3, after attaching nylon lifting strap for subsequent recovery, I began cutting away the ship's bell support stanchion using an oxy-arc ultrathermic cutting torch. I left approximately one quarter of the cutting incomplete so that the bell could be cut and removed the following day, July 4.

Dive three took place on the morning of July 4. I finished the cutting and then guided the bell and its support frame clear of the various obstructions around it. Once it was in the clear, I instructed topside to commence lifting and the bell was retrieved to the surface. Family members of the missing crew, as well as the media, were anxiously awaiting the surfacing of the *Edmund Fitzgerald's* bell and it was quite an emotional few minutes as the bell broke the surface and was hoisted aboard.

On July 5 we made a fourth dive to the wreck to replace the original bell with a replica. The cast brass replica, made from the plans of the original bell, was highly polished and bore the names of the crewman of *Fitzgerald* deeply inscribed on its surface. This was also an emotional time, since the family members were watching the video monitors and could see the video image from my shoulder camera as I rung the newly replaced Bell 29 times in memory of the crew lost 20 years before. Two additional dives were made to remove all traces of our presence on the wreck and to do some additional surveying and filming of the stern section.

On July 7, the bell of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* was officially handed from the Ontario Government to the State of Michigan. The bell was to be sent to a Michigan university for conservation prior to shipment to its final resting place in the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point, Michigan.

All in all, the Bell recovery project was a total success and the family members were very pleased with the operation and extremely appreciative of the work done by the Newsuit and its crew. The families and the general public will now be able to come to the museum, which will have a special area for the Bell and a wing dedicated to the legendary *Fitzgerald*. Bruce Fuoco, *Newsuit Pilot*, July 12, 1995

Fuoco suffered a serious stroke a couple of years after the *Fitzgerald* bell recovery dives, but after months of hyperbaric oxygen treatments and physiotherapy, his condition improved dramatically. Bruce still sport dives and has become an avid ocean kayaker. Most recently he invented and is the manufacturer of a one-arm kayak paddling system for the impaired.

MEDIA MADNESS

A few of the 30+ plus media photographers are videotaped by one of their own (bottom left) in this analog video frame capture. Photo: P. Nuytten



The comment Bruce made in his report that it was an "emotional few minutes" when the bell broke the surface was, perhaps, a touch understated. Here's my recollection:

July 4 1995 - When the bell broke the surface alongside the *Anglian Lady*, the scene on deck was chaos. In the

background, the Can-Dive Newsuit crew and the *Fitzgerald* family members were obviously elated - grinning and laughing - pleased at the successful recovery. In the foreground, the various media representatives were nearly hysterical! There was a slew of them - cheek to cheek - whacking each other with their big shoulder-mounted Beta SP camcorders each time they turned . . . while the sound guys were mincing around on tip toes, trying to extend their pole-mics as far as possible into the melee. There were so many video and still cameras pointed at the Newsuit, as Bruce was hoisted aboard, that the cameramen were literally shooting each other. I was at the gunwhale of the *Anglian Lady* and also shooting video, but I was shooting the media feeding frenzy.

A couple of months ago, I went through some of this decade-old video for a friend who was preparing a *Fitzgerald* presentation for November 2005. As I watched it, I was nearly gnashing my teeth because I hadn't taken any stills of this deck-circus even though my trusty Nikon was hanging around my neck. So that you can get a sense of just how bizarre things were for those few minutes we've printed a video frame of a photographer who was obviously so amazed at the photo frenzy that he turned away from the bell and began to shoot the solid mass of photographers. The quality from this analog video frame leaves a lot to desired but you'll get the general idea.

Speaking of which, compare this frame to the pictures of the Newtsuit on the cover of this venerable magazine. Those 'stills' are also prints captured from video - but from high definition video (hi-def/HD). The quality of those shots is stunning - particularly since the Sony hi-def system was, essentially, a prototype unit, and as I mentioned before, one of only two in existence in 1995.

NOT FORGOTTEN

Finally, I'd like you to be aware that a controversy ensued when it became generally known that the *Fitzgerald* was off-limits for any sort of diving - or remote imaging - unless authorized by the issuance of a formal Canadian Government permit. This move was undertaken to preserve the wreck as a memorial and gravesite - though it is not officially designated as such.

A poignant testimony to the emotion still felt by the families of *Fitzgerald's* men is the September 13, 2005, posting to the Great Lakes and Seaway webpage at www.boatnerd.com. This popular site describes itself as the 'online source for great lakes commercial information.' The posting was part of a huge forum that had as its discussion subject 'The loss of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*' and was from Deb (Champeau) Gomez-Felder, of Nashotah, Wisconsin.

"My thoughts are so much different, now, from 30 years ago when my father went down on the *Fitz*. I have always wanted my father's remains brought up due to the invasion of his burial site, but over the years I have felt that this was out of my control. Now, knowing that swimmers and divers are going on continuously over the years, makes closure impossible for me. My father deserved so much more than this.

God rest their souls and always know, Dad, I miss you every day and love you like it was yesterday. I live with the fact that I'm powerless in your burial site, but will never give up the hope of bringing you home to your grave where no one can rob or touch any part of you! I know your soul is in Heaven.

Luv, your daughter, Debby" ❁



Author shown with the replacement bell that bears the names of the 29 seamen lost with the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. Photo: Doug Elsey - Can-Dive

in Clelia was a galling piece of one-upmanship that he planned to counter by hiring his own submarine. Shannon and the Delta crew made eight dives on the wreck of the *Fitzgerald* and obtained more than 10 hours of footage. Little has been written of the details of this expedition - but perhaps that's because Shannon managed to outrage nearly everybody associated with the *Fitzgerald* by taking photos and footage of the remains of one of *Fitzgerald's* crew - coverall-clad and still wearing a life vest - that he discovered on the debris laden lake bottom. Shannon then announced to the media that he might release the images as part of a planned film/documentary and book. It doesn't take much imagination to guess the reaction to this news. Families of the *Fitzgerald's* lost crewmen quickly denounced the plan saying they believed it to be exploitive desecration of the common gravesite of their loved ones.

July 1995

Tom Farnquist, of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum, working in conjunction with Emory Kristof of National Geographic Magazine, Phil Nuytten of Hard Suits International Inc., Joe MacInnis of Undersea Research Ltd., and members of the families of the sunken vessel, organized an expedition to recover the bell of the *Fitzgerald*. It was to become a permanent, tangible memorial for the families of the *Fitzgerald's* lost crewman. A brief overview of the dives made to recover that bell is the subject of the accompanying story.

September 1, 1995

Tech divers Terrence Tysall and Mike Zee conducted a dive on the wreck for reasons best explained in Tysall's words (the following is from the website of the Cambrian Foundation at <http://cambrianfoundation.org>): "Mike decided that 1995 was the year he would touch the *Edmund Fitzgerald* with his gloved hand as the first SCUBA diver to reach the wreck. No small feat considering the *Fitzgerald* rests under 540 feet (165m) of 36°F (2.2°C) water in Lake Superior. For reasons known only to Mike, he decided to extend to me the undeserved invitation to make the attempt with him. Needless to say, I jumped at the opportunity." The divers used open circuit SCUBA and each carried nearly 500 cubic feet of tri-mix gas and had a total bottom time of 12 minutes.

After 1995?

No known 'official' dives have been made to the *Fitzgerald* in the last Decade, but rumors persist in the tech diving fraternity that other, surreptitious, descents have been made. The only reason to make such a quickie 'illegal' dive (without a permit) is to be able to say that you've done it - bragging rights - and DIVER hasn't heard any identifiable individual or group bragging about such a dive. ❁